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Copy No. 333

MATTHEW MARIS

Emery Walker Ph. Sc.

The Outskirts of a Town

From the picture by Matthew Maris
by kind permission of Hugh Campbell, esq.

MATTHEW MARIS

BY ERNEST D. FRIDLANDER

WITH A FRONTISPIECE FROM A PAINTING IN OILS & SEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SKETCHES IN PENCIL, WATER-COLOUR, ETC.

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MATTHEW MARIS

PART I

INTRODUCTION, AND ST. JOHN'S WOOD TERRACE: WITH NOTES ON MATTHEW MARIS' VIEWS ON ART TEACHING

MATTHEW MARIS

I

AN impulse, too deep, too clear, and too persisting to be disregarded, has urged me to write what the ensuing pages hold, and in obeying it I have been conscious of chiefly two desires—one, that I might bring to all those interested in Matthew Maris and his work at least some little of all that it was given me to glean from an unbroken intercourse with him extending through some seventeen years; the other, that I might make more widely known facts in connection with the life and character of one who not alone was a great artist, but also a great man. It seems to me that in these times there attaches an especial significance to his life; his personality was unique and fascinating and, from a variety of causes, his was one of those natures in connection with which many misconceptions are likely to arise, and much that is inaccurate to become disseminated. And in the course of very frequent visits that I paid to Matthew Maris through all the last years of his life, not only did he freely speak of aims and methods of his work, but also expressed much of his own thought upon the works of other artists of all time. The

conversations which we had together ranged over many of those matters of deepest interest in life—not art alone, but philosophic, religious, and social questions would often form the subject of his talk; nor did he fail to give expression simply and directly to that which he truly felt and believed in. And, in addition, from time to time he told me all the leading facts of his own life, and many details of it, from boyhood up to the period of our first meeting—from the days of the little garret in his father's house he loved so well, and whence he said he never wished to wander forth into the world.

Sometimes it has been subject for regret to me that I did not record accounts of any of the hours we spent together immediately after they had passed, as many interesting details and his actual words are often thus inevitably lost. But, on the other hand, my memory at time of setting down the many notes that I possess was very clear, nor have I ever " tried to remember " anything, but have written only that which has been presented to my mind quite clearly of itself, without any conscious effort upon my part, writing as though from some dictation. And every statement to be found in that which follows as to the views of Matthew Maris upon life or art contains unchanged the essence of his words spoken directly to me, and no piece of information on these matters from any other source has been included; nor have I added from imagination—but where unconscious memory has failed, I have omitted. In a few instances his actual words are given.

It always seemed to me that, had I made a practice of writing down what passed between us at individual visits, this must have led inevitably to some artificiality or purpose in them other than that of seeking the happiness and profit that I always found in being with him, and of satisfying the desire I always felt to bring him sympathy in intellectual life, in matters artistic, or in connection with ordinary affairs—and such a purpose would to Matthew Maris have been utterly repugnant. Lastly, as the manner of our coming together was somewhat strange, so also was our whole intercourse. Well was he aware of my sympathy with him in regard to the struggles of his life, also of my love of his work and appreciation of the essence of it; nor was he insensible of that deep attraction that his strong personality and tender nature exercised for me; and there were many likings which we had in common. I owe the reader an apology for introducing into this brief memoir of Matthew Maris anything relating to myself, but from the very nature of what was to be recorded it has not seemed to me avoidable. It should be clearly stated that what follows does not presume to be, even in brief, a biography of Matthew Maris—indeed, one day, when he was lying ill, he said he felt it in the nature of things not possible that, in the truest sense, one man could ever write another man's biography, as none could do more than conjecture at the soul experience of another. Also, where this account may fail, as in detailed statements as to dates, or places, or similar information with reference to his individual works, there is no doubt that these

deficiencies will at some time amply be made good by the minuter work of others.

For want of literary form in that which follows, I crave the indulgence of the reader—I hope that none can question its veracity.

II

IT chanced one day, some time I think in the commencing months of 1899, that, being at a friend's house in the Midlands, I met by good fortune a Dutch lady there. Together we were all sitting about the fireside, when conversation turned, I do not remember how, upon a celebrated and strange Dutch artist named Matthew Maris, who lived a lonely life somewhere in a London garret, seeing but few people, showing his work with great reluctance if at all, being unwilling to dispose of it, and painting for the most part Brides. I remember how something in the vision of this man thus conjured up aroused my sympathy, partly by reason of the solitude and strangeness of his existence, and partly through the nature of his vocation—everything associated with art work having long been to me of the deepest interest. And its result was to excite in me an irresistible desire of making his acquaintance. Expressing this at once to the Dutch visitor, she promised to obtain for me the introduction requisite. It was not long before this came, and through the kindness of one of the nieces of the artist. Meanwhile I had the opportunity of seeing some little of the work of Matthew Maris, two examples of which were exhibited in London in the spring of 1899, one of the paintings, the second of which I do not now recall, being

the "Souvenir of Amsterdam," which created a profound impression in my mind, producing, as did also at a later time my first vision of the "Four Mills," such an effect in nature and degree as I had not before experienced. Clearly do I remember in connection with the "Four Mills," not only being struck with its peculiar and unique technique, and as it were its manifold depth of surface, but with its solemn almost monumental composition; and that I was aware of feeling how this small simple work made manifest a divine quality immanent in quite ordinary things.

When there arrived the longed-for note of introduction, with it armed I hastened to St. John's Wood Terrace, where Matthew Maris was at that time living. But fresh impatience was to fire the quest. The number on the magic card proved wrong, and at the indicated house nothing was known as to his whereabouts. And many another door I tried with no result, excepting that at one the hopeful landlady, placing herself back towards the street, declared that once a person of that name had lived there, but had vanished without settling his score. Escaping in despondency, the thought of enquiry at the Post Office then came to me, and there, referred to a providential postman, I was at last put in possession of the correct address. Thitherward I went, excitement growing, and remember well, when but a few short paces from the goal, remarking something rather stark and bare about a ground-floor window, arising from the lower part being shuttered, and there being neither blind nor curtains visible—and how I felt that this must be the window of

the painter's work-room. His careful janitress at first appeared to look upon me with a shade of doubt, but quickly disappearing into the master's room, after a little interval emerged, and I, not without trepidation, was soon ushered in. All that first interview in detail I do not now remember but recall that I saw my card upon his table, and heard him make some jocular remark upon the name's significance. Soon I must have said how it had been told me that he would not mind looking at a small canvas I had brought with me, and giving me his advice. And very soon he was regarding it and making a remark most characteristic of him, that he was glad there were no people in it, in that they spoiled almost invariably the solitudes of Nature. This led to talk of Nature and Art Teaching, and, through my excitement, I became aware of feeling strong attraction towards him, and of happiness in his society, and also of keen enjoyment of the curious character that helped to give his room so marked an "atmosphere."

We must have been some time together before I felt the moment come, too soon, for my departing—felt, too, most strongly that I must be with him again, and penetrate more deeply into his personality. Together we were standing near to his work-room door when I made bold to query: "May I come again?" and he, with brows contracted, and a sparkle, piercing, amused, and somewhat mischievous, in his blue eyes, made answer: "Suppose that I say No!" "Then," I retorted, divining what lay beneath, "I should come all the same," and with that parting shot retreated, he following to the front door which

he opened for me. And as I closed the gate into the street, and turning raised and waved my hat to him, he waved his hand to me. So ended our first interview, and I sped away feeling elated and enriched. During the time that we had spent together I well remember, though paying no special heed to anything about his room, consciously realizing its peculiarities, while all my attention and interest were held captive by his personality. It was not long before a second visit came, and then a third, and at this period I must have been with Matthew Maris once in about three weeks—just when I felt desire, and soon he seemed a necessary part of my existence. A year or so later these visits often would occur more frequently, and towards his life's close I would be with him once, twice, or three times in the week, seldom remaining with him less than two hours. Brief intercourse with friends, it should be mentioned, was not agreeable to him. For me the hours fled always all too rapidly, and not seldom so for Matthew Maris, and at a word of leaving on my part he would resort to various designs for staying the departure —reading favourite passages from books, producing interesting drawings, cuttings from newspapers, and the like, or would exclaim sometimes in mild derision: " You get awa' wi' ye!"

The rooms in which he lived when I first met him had previously been occupied by Mr. van Wisselingh, his friend, and the good landlady, Mrs. Biggs, looked after Matthew Maris with great consideration, intelligence, and care. More of his work-room later.

Here he passed nineteen years, living a Spartan and most simple life. All the year round his grate was destitute of fire, and through all wintry weather he would keep the upper part of his north window opened wide, creating thus an atmosphere in which his friends, less hardy, sometimes paid dearly, if with willing fortitude, for happiness in his society; and sometimes he would say with evident enjoyment as icy currents crept about the room, how much he liked to feel the free air blowing overhead. His custom of going fireless dated, I fancy, from his years in Paris, when once he and his brother James, two days without food, were driven to make use of their furniture to fill the stove. Also, his work-room in St. John's Wood Terrace had but an ordinary grate, and when at work he could not tolerate the flickering of an open fire. Sometimes, in severe weather, he would place a lighted lamp upon the floor at that end of the table nearest to the window, where he usually sat, but little did it seem to mitigate the often penetrating chill. This room in which Matthew Maris lived and worked was but a small one, its dimensions not exceeding about thirteen feet each way. It looked nearly north, fortunately across a relatively broad part of St. John's Wood Terrace, where the almshouses that are opposite stand well back from the road, and thus what light he had was unimpeded. It was but little more than some nine feet in height—its window not large. Of this, a dark blind or shutter obscured the lower part, admitting no vision of the street; its upper sash wide open on winter and on summer days alike, till evening

was advanced, framed only changing pictures of the skies. There were no curtains, and I well remember how all within seemed relatively dark and sombre, though no thought of its being so occurred to me while there with Matthew Maris, so utterly the glow and fervour of his nature would engross attention and inform and light the whole. Along the western wall and near the window was placed a fair-sized oval table covered with a green cloth, and at its window end, where Matthew Maris used to sit, a small old writing desk was set. The table was, in addition, covered with an extraordinary profusion of small objects impossible to describe in detail—bottles of amber varnish, small pipes, tools, paint rags, and the like. It was his working, thinking, and writing table, and as such was kept in no sort of set arrangement. On the dark grey-brown wall above his table there hung a chromo-lithograph belonging to his landlady, which, though it could give no sort of satisfaction to his most critical judgement, he would not have removed, being always averse to any action that might wound the feelings of another. The fireplace was in the east wall of the room, and was surmounted by a portrait, three-quarter length, in oil, framed in old gold, which will be noticed later. A sideboard of mahogany was set against the southern wall. Beneath the window were a sofa and a small armchair—also an old Dutch seventeenth-century chair; and nearer to the centre of the floor his easel stood. Resting against the walls were sundry canvases, drawing boards, and a portfolio, and these my curiosity, with difficulty checked,

found only too provocative. There also were a few deal cases that held unfinished works, but I cannot recall their number, or their usual position in the room. Matthew Maris had an intense dislike of any interference with the usual arrangement of his work-room on the part of others, and objected strongly to permitting indiscriminate satisfaction of the housewife's instinct for removing dust, of which, in many a likely harbouring place, was no small quantity collected.

Here and there upon the window-sill, the easel, and the table, were fragments of brown paper with little heaps of oil paint on them. Matthew Maris explained that preferring to use his paint quite dry, he employed this method of extracting superfluous oil from it; the drier pigment allowing him to obtain more readily the rough grained texture that he then was seeking in his work; and also diminished the " shine " of oil paint as generally used. This he disliked, not only finding that it tried his eyes, but also that it rendered work more difficult to be truly seen.

Working in conventional studios was distasteful to him; and indeed, as already the reader will have gathered, the whole appearance and the feeling of his work-room were different far from those of ordinary studios, whose name alone was disagreeable to Matthew Maris. One such he previously had tried on Primrose Hill, and this with no success—he found the lighting quite unsuitable, being too much diffused about the room; and sometimes he had worked in John Swan's studio in Acacia Road.

Many another artist must have experienced the repugnance Matthew Maris felt towards studios of the conventional description. One's art is best when it flows naturally and spontaneously one knows not how, without one's artificially placing oneself under surroundings that are more or less unnatural. And in the mere going of set purpose into a room supposed to be especially adapted and prepared, there may be something antagonistic to spontaneous art, since never can an artist compel himself to make, as by prescription, a beautiful thing. While in a more ordinary room, in which one also lives as well as works, one feels perhaps more natural and less conscious of set aim. So Matthew Maris felt, and for himself desired always to be natural, and liked his work-place to be ordinary too, in everything but size and lighting of its window. The windows being generally much larger in Dutch houses than those of corresponding English ones, are thus much more adapted, without any alteration to fill the painter's need. That of Matthew Maris' small room, however, was neither so large nor high as to allow his painting at his easel with an illumination approaching uniformity over a canvas even of moderate size, and certainly did not render possible his working on the larger ones he had about him. Once with a humorous smile he said to me, *à propos* of the manner in which he was constrained to do his work: "You see I am a very pious painter . . ." for most often to obtain the requisite lighting he would kneel upon the floor, his drawing resting on the seat and back of the old Dutch chair already mentioned, and which indeed he used

to call his easel. The only work that, to my knowledge, he completed during his last seven or eight years at St. John's Wood Terrace was a very beautiful ideal head in grey Italian chalk which is now in the museum at Rotterdam.

III

HERE was it at St. John's Wood Terrace that, not long after our first meeting, Matthew Maris would from time to time recount to me the chief facts of his life from boyhood upwards, with many of its details; show to me photographs of relatives and friends; tell of the many pranks in which he and his brother James loved to indulge; of his own long roll of harmless mischiefs; of student days at Antwerp, and the years in Paris. Here also he described his first coming to England, spoke often of his experiences in this country, and of all his many acquaintances and friends. Here was it, too, that there commenced his numberless interesting talks on Art and his own views of it, and of Art Teaching, particulars of which I hope to give below; here also that he first began to let me see his work.

From what little Matthew Maris said about his parents, I rather gathered the impressions of a mother large-natured, warm-hearted, and indulgent, inclined to shield him in his harmless peccadilloes; of a father intelligent, industrious, and grave—severe perhaps—failing not infrequently to understand and sympathize with the genius, his son. But be that as it may, seldom did Matthew Maris speak of him in later life but tears would not be far off from his eyes. It was his thought, however, that parents

never really understood their children. The father was a printer, and brought into the home stores of good literature, much of which his son had both inclination and opportunity for reading; and as I have elsewhere said, he thus became acquainted with the writings of Vosmaer, in which he took especial interest.

Carel Vosmaer, who was born in 1826 and studied at the University of Leyden, though he had some time held a position in the Judiciary, devoted himself from about his thirty-fourth year almost exclusively to the study of art. He lived at the Hague, where Matthew Maris was born in 1839, and he was editor of the "Netherlands Spectator." Matthew Maris would often quote a fine passage from his writings in which he dwelt on Rembrandt's utter weariness of critics and empiric criticism. With the sentiment of this passage Maris was in entire sympathy—and once he repeated it as he lay ill in bed, not long before his death.

He told me how one day, the family, then living at the Hague, being absent from the house, there came the alluring notion to him and to his brother James of smoking their grandfather's long pipe—so long it was that Matthew could manipulate it only by sitting on a chair, and resting its ample bowl upon the floor. Just at the critical moment as James, having snatched a live coal from the fire, was setting free the spirit of the weed, and Matthew was preparing to imbibe, the room door opened, and there entered father, grandfather, and mother too—and the *dénouement* he left to be imagined. Another time, it was escape from school that Matthew Maris planned, and

peppering his tongue till it assumed the needful sickly hue, he disclosed his symptoms to his mother. Straightway, with a misplaced solicitude, he was dispatched to bed, there to await the doctor's coming. The doctor, however, was as keen as he, and quickly penetrating his disguise declared he must remain a prisoner. Having been ever apt himself for frolic and for fun, he always was indulgent towards youthful pranks, and just as much so when these were aimed against himself, and even in old age, as when, for instance, vigorous rappings at his front door in Westbourne Square would, in the absence of his housekeeper, take him down two long flights of stairs to find but fast-retreating impish boys.

He always had been very fond of children, and they, it would seem, of him; and some of his many drawings and paintings of them are unsurpassed; some I think, which will be referred to later, perhaps unrivalled in certain qualities by similar works of any other master. Once at the Hague when he was painting out of doors—a water-colour—a little girl who watched him, asked if he had not yet done. "No," said he, and she departed. Returning a little later, she questioned him again, and this time receiving an affirmative reply, dashed over his work a handful of sand she had brought with her for the purpose! He spoke of it as though it had been quite a natural thing, and without the least trace of resentment.

He disapproved of children being constrained to be "too good," feeling it contrary to their proper nature that they should be so. It would seem that as a boy he exercised

shrewd observation of the ways of people. One day, when painting near to an old bridge, folk began to gather round about him, till unobserved he stole away, and from a point of vantage watched the little crowd still growing and growing, looking for it knew not what.

It was a fortunate circumstance when he was fond of copying drawings as a boy that good material for this purpose came in his way. And as already has been elsewhere said he made these copies not only with complete fidelity to the originals, but direct with pen and ink—the occasion of his naively and humorously one day saying to the writer: "So you see, man, I was a clever chap!" It seems to me worth observing that one of his very early and original drawings in pen and ink of the old port of Antwerp with men loading up ships, shows in its execution beginnings of the dislike of hardness, and love of tenderness and indefiniteness of outline, that so strongly characterized his later work. Tenderness of feeling and humanity seem indeed to be marked characteristics of the earliest work of his that I have seen.

The brothers James and Matthew were fond of roaming about together in the country, often making excursions on the ice in the great cold of winter in a sledge of home construction, and deeply did the beauty of the wintry scenes appeal to Matthew. His affection for the garret bedroom in his father's house has already been remarked, and from it, having no trace of ambition in the ordinary sense, he said he never had desire to stray. Therein it would seem came to him presentiments of what his life must be, and

there as he lay abed one night he dreamed he saw a multitude of vigorous young men marching all forward towards a sun-like light—and as they came within a certain distance of it they fell down one by one and died. This he would say was symbolic of his life—always as it were "lured on towards destruction." This he could not have meant save in the sense of worldly success so-called. Who of artistic judgement acquainted with his life and but a few of the many masterpieces he created, can fail to realize the greatness of his achievement; how in all senses but that one of what the world miscalls "success," his life was a continued triumph of the ideal and the spiritual over material powers, just as was that of Blake? And if perhaps at times, in later life, he dwelt too much with bitterness upon the vast disparity between the material value of his work and the comparative pittance that he most often had received for it in the past, it was on principle, and on the score of all those sufferings of fellow artists which he knew too well, that he resented this, far more than on account of any hardship or humiliation that it undoubtedly had caused in his own life.

Many a student revel had relieved the tedium of long hours of work in the years of study spent by Matthew Maris at the Antwerp Academy, where he in company with Alma Tadema would sit till midnight intent on mastering anatomy. Together they cut out paper models of the principal muscles, affixing them in place upon their skeleton—the skeleton that later, on the removal of one of them to fresh quarters, they lowered by a cord at

midnight from the window to the street below. At Antwerp Matthew Maris also made a thorough study of perspective, which then appealed to him, and in which he attained to considerable proficiency, taking much pleasure in working out elaborate exercises in it. Mechanism also much interested him. Planning one day to visit, in company with a fellow student, an exhibition in another town, it was agreed between them they should take an early morning train there. Matthew Maris, not thinking it worth while to go to bed for such a little time, elected to sit up and while away the hours by taking to pieces an old clock and reconstructing it. But so great became his absorption in the pastime that the train he had sat up for was forgotten utterly, and ultimately lost.

He easily could have taken prizes in the various courses of study he pursued, but he refrained, disliking intensely all competition, and having no desire to place himself in front of others.

In 1869 Matthew Maris set forth for the French capital, leaving behind his native land, his home, and jovial student days—feeling most deeply, as he said in later years, the great gulf that existed between life at Antwerp and the Academy, and that in the great world beyond—feeling, too, how little of a preparation the former seemed for all the trials and difficulties of the latter.

In his environment in Paris were many elements congenial to his artist's soul. The aspect of Montmartre when he lived there, so different from that which it now in part presents, with its streets of modern and unlovely habita-

tions, was all agreeable to his taste. There were old houses, windmills, quarries, and small trees—enough of Nature to satisfy his feeling, enough to make scarcely possible the sense of an imprisonment by walls of stone—and all about him at his feet there lay the wonderland of Paris. Is not one tempted to conjecture these ideal surroundings for an artist with soul fashioned as was his?

Perhaps the few years of his sojourning here in France were on the whole the part of his life's wandering most often touched and dwelt upon in our talks. And although he thought it less likely that an artist might meet with starvation as his lot in England than in France, there was very much in the latter country that ever claimed and held his sympathy, both in the people, with their instinctive appreciation of things artistic, and in the natural graces of their wonderful and varied land. Not only did the graciousness possessed by so much of French landscape make strong appeal to him, but he also loved the prevailing greyish tone of the buildings of northern France.

He had besides a love that rose to veneration for their expression so manifold and consummate in Gothic art and architecture.

He kept about him in his later life many reproductions of examples of French architecture, which often we would examine with pleasure when together, he pointing out their various excellences; and one of them, a large photograph of a porch of Rouen Cathedral, was fixed upon his wall, so as to be always near him as he sat to read or

write in the night silence of his work-room at Westbourne Square. There still was much of the old Rouen left when Matthew Maris saw it, and the gradual disappearance of these vestiges of the past he often would deplore.

The following short extract from one of his letters, written in September 1914, shows this love of fine architecture still persisting in him.

" I wish you could get the newspaper man [editor] to publish Thring's saying—

" ' As the true disciple gazes, spirit answers spirit. The glorious poem languaged in the stone breaks forth into a silent chant of life; voiceless thoughts breathed out of their fair structure pass to the gazer's soul and enter there. And these revive the memory of nobler minds who built their hearts, their blood, their all, into those walls.' "

Let us beware, however, of imagining that Matthew Maris, with so much that was congenial about him when in Paris, dwelt here and moved within an artist's paradise, creating at his will, and seek to form a truer picture of his state. After reflecting much on all he said, and also upon his work, it is hardly possible to escape from the impression that there was a prevailing tone of sadness at this time about the background of his life—relieved although we know it to have been by many an incident of happy fellowship, and by that joy in the triumphant practice of his art that yet may come so near to sadness, and so often is associated with it in the painter's life.

In the album given to him in his boyhood, and into which he copied drawings of Richter and of others (and

wherein later were collected pencil sketches and etchings of his own with a few reproductions of the works of other artists), there is one rough sketch in Italian chalk of a young woman lying prone upon the ground.

"Vanished Illusions" he always called it, and two or more other versions of it exist, I think, in colour, under different names. At the time of Matthew Maris' death, and for some while before it, a larger oil painting of the same conception remained upon his easel at 18 Westbourne Square, but utterly unfinished. Now sadly he would say, and this throws light upon his state of feeling there, that this "Vanished Illusions" was the first thing that he drew on reaching Paris, and that it also was the work on which he was engaged at last. Sadness at the beginning, and sadness at the end, but still with how much of sunshine and laughter of the Gods between. And may we not pause in passing to reflect upon this illustration of the mysterious fashion in which the threads of happiness and sadness were interwoven in his life and art—that in his last year not only was he working on the representation of his vision of grief, but also on that canvas of the little child with butterflies which is a pure embodiment of childlike joy? And let us remember it was joy that triumphed, for though this painting never reached the state to which he wished to bring it, it yet remains, compared with "Grief," a work complete and beautiful.

To Paris the young master had come yearning to express the dreams romantic, idyllic, and ideal in Nature that haunted his imaginative soul; but saddened and dis-

illusioned, intuitively feeling conscious of that way of difficulty, poverty, and trial which lay before him if he followed his ideals. He came, as his own words and as his sketch-books in part show, longing to express visions of beauty from within himself, instinct with qualities of song and painter's poetry, and not to manufacture works to sell. It is not difficult to see how with this spiritual desire dominant, and he at the same time so poor that monetary considerations were practically a necessity, there lay herein sufficient cause, apart from others that existed, for much of real sadness in the background of his days. Painting for money was utterly repugnant to him, and for work, as he styled it, "done to please," he had nothing but contempt. It should be added that he deeply felt the responsibility and dignity of his art, with which he could never trifle, for to him it was as to the masters of old time, a gift to be devoted only to the most serious ends. What he was ever desiring, but never really found until too late, was something of a peaceful home and work-place where he might body forth his dreams, free from the harassment of material cares. His brother James had previously written inviting him to come to him in Paris and sing out his own song there, but on his arrival he found but little of the requisite environment, and much to humiliate and jar. This much is certain, that James, whose course in art, when he had most completely found himself, was widely different from that of Matthew, had no very deep insight into his brother's nature, or perception of those means and circumstances that would have been most

conducive to the self-expression of his genius. The former would often suggest his hiring models and copying from them, just the last thing that Matthew needed, or that would have been profitable to his art, for the ideal visions which he wished to embody were to be drawn or painted only from the images in his imagination, and never by any possibility from models. All that Matthew Maris needed was a congenial, quiet, suitable environment where he might bring forth unfettered his music from within, and express the profoundly deep feeling that he had for Nature without, however, directly working from her, which he had already done sufficiently in earlier years. His means were straitened. An allowance of fifty francs per month necessitated an existence of most frugal care. At one time he and James were two days without food and urged to the extremity of using their furniture for fuel, when by good fortune, James disposing of a picture, they were enabled to put an end to the unwelcome fasting, and together sped post-haste to the enjoyment of a substantial feast.

Matthew, who was driven for economy to the device of splitting each of his matches into four, related with much amusement how, on one occasion, having invested in a week's supply, he inadvertently set fire to the whole bundle, and in a moment lost his precious store. And sometimes he said he had found it inadvisable to be at home when the good woman called who brought his linen from the laundry. On one occasion, when he was seeking to dispose of one of his own paintings, he was offered £2

for it, and that not for its own merits in the would-be purchaser's eyes, but on his brother's account!

In the great struggle of 1870 his sympathies were with the French, and many amusing anecdotes he would recount of his experiences as a soldier. On bitter nights of winter he was on sentry duty, his frozen feet pinched into boots a size too small. When these had been served out to him he was counselled to make exchange of them with anyone else that he might find who happened to possess too large a pair, but as this second much-to-be-desired unfortunate never was forthcoming, the sentry's little misery went unrelieved. He spoke too of the terribly poor quality of the food available, and of its scarcity; of bread all but uneatable; and of how once when looking from his bedroom window across a small court-yard at the back, he saw arrayed beneath a neighbouring window a gruesome provision of dead rats. And the miscellaneous mixtures of dried leaves that kept his small pipe aglow had often little kinship with tobacco. He seems to have been not unhappy in the days of the Commune, preferring, as he said, honestly earning his poor seven sous a day to bartering his soul for money through the instrumentality of his art.

Here was it in Paris there came to him van Gogh, saying he was desirous of pursuing the spiritual in art, and asking for advice of Matthew Maris—to whom the latter answered: "Go take a rope and hang yourself," implying he might as well do that as encounter the starvation that in all probability awaited him in such a course as he proposed.

And yet it was this way of difficulty—pursuit of immaterial ends in art—that Matthew Maris, dauntless, chose for himself to follow, and clung to till the ending of his days.

Tragic happenings in the lives of some of his acquaintances in Paris did anything but help relieve his sometime sadness, or to dispel those clouds of pessimism that from time to time obscured his horizon and hid the gladness of his skies. One artist whom he knew died literally of starvation—a fine fellow, Matthew Maris said; while another, left penniless after an illness, flung himself from a window and was killed. The contemplation of such fates, and of lives like that of Monticelli, and full realization of the devastating results so often, alas! produced, not in the world of art alone, by want even of the merest pittance sufficient for carrying on work, and for keeping life together if for that end alone, filled him at times with utter bitterness and resentment against the seeming callous world.

And yet, in spite of his unhappiness, Matthew Maris continued to produce work which rose above his pain, and amongst masterpieces created at this time were the "Four Mills" and solemn "Souvenir of Amsterdam." From an extremely slight sketch made in the vicinity of Paris, he painted the "Outskirts of a Town," wherein there seems to breathe through trees and over walls and water, in its manifold, mysterious, and grey silent depths, a suggestion of the mediaeval, and a sense of world-old weariness and tragedy. Does not one realize in contemplation of it how its maker not merely felt and painted his

pictures in the ordinary sense, but, literally and actually dwelling in them, informed them with the fine essence of his soul?

His sketch-books of this period exhibit in the main two sorts of drawings—those emanating completely from within himself, and those suggested from without. He took much pleasure in his latest years in looking at these books of sketches—at that perhaps most which held the latter sort of notes. The greater part of them were executed in grey Italian chalk, the paler coloured of the two varieties, which he much liked not only for its beautiful silvery quality, but because, unlike lead pencil, it did not produce the irritating surface glow.

These sketches show him to have often wandered happily enough about the environs and pleasure grounds of Paris. They are in general delicate and dreamy notes, always poetical, of riverside scenery—distant shores and buildings, water, boats, with stems and roots of trees twisted as though by fairy hands into harmonious forms, and now and then with incidental figures as of children, or a boatman in his craft.

One book was filled almost entirely with tentative ideal sketches, extremely loose and free in execution, just shadowing forth an idyllic composition of two figures in ever-changing pose, sometimes the two figures separately —a prince it might be and the lady of his choice, a theme which seemed to often haunt his fancy at this time. It was in especial, romantic visions such as these he ever was seeking to express. There is a sketch also of a girl,

extremely sweet and gracious in her gesture, kneeling to entice with leaves the favourite goat and kids, and from this last he made a painting, saying, however, that it did not work out successfully, being too hard, though we should not forget how intensely critical of his work he was in this respect.

Matthew Maris often visited the Cluny Museum, whose rooms, dim-lighted and mediaeval in their atmosphere, and whose wonderful collection of *mobiliers* of the Middle Ages, possessed for him a lasting fascination. Mediaeval furniture, costume, metalwork, and glass especially, were sources of delight to him, as may in part be gathered from his work; and often he would make slight drawings for his future use of such examples as appealed to him most forcibly.

The value of an artist's life in Paris studios, in his opinion, lay not so much in the art training thus obtained as in the education it afforded of living and working under cosmopolitan conditions.

From his own lips, which could have uttered nothing but the truth, I had it, that towards the ending of these years in Paris, where he had made masterpieces, and where his mind was ever filled with visions unrealized of many more, he still remained quite poor, without a home in which to work, or any prospect. Then was it that he met with Daniel Cottier, the decorator and worker in stained glass, who promised him that if he, Matthew Maris, would come to London, he there should have a home wherein he might work out his soul and be himself. And Matthew Maris,

still capable of hope, lured by the offer, and urged by straitened circumstances, acceded to Cottier's invitation.

Again, unhappy Fates pursued his steps, and disappointment, this time of a more bitter sort, I gathered from his words, awaited him. He worked for Cottier during fifteen years, years which there can be no doubt whatever were fraught for him with deep unhappiness, and much that to his sensitive spirit was humiliating. Though, except at the beginning of this time, he lived in Cottier's house which overlooked Regent's Park, certain it is he never found there the home of his desire in which he freely could express his own ideas, and the promise of which had been foremost among those influences inducing him to quit Paris for the English capital. Also there is no doubt that Matthew Maris was set to do work that it cannot but be matter for regret to all true artists and lovers of fine art that he ever was allowed to be engaged upon—for instance, designing gas-globes and painting upon designs of others! Yet, under these conditions, did Matthew Maris once more produce masterpieces, mastered etching, and wrought out his series of *eaux-fortes*, unique in technique, in many ways unlike all others ever made, and culminating in the monumental etching of "The Sower." But who shall fathom the bitterness of spirit in which he mostly worked, memories of which, haunting him through all his later years, so often found expression in his talk. In company with Cottier he travelled at one time through parts of Norway, seeming to have acted as courier, and to have learned a little Norwegian for the purpose, but

I never gathered from anything that he told me of the journey that he reaped either interest or enjoyment from it.

Let us remember that to Matthew Maris the ways of business were not possible, least of all in connection with his art. Such a thing as the consideration, before embarking upon any piece of work, of possible material gain that he himself might reap from it was, to his nature, inadmissible; and bartering a work of art for money seemed to him no less a thing than bargaining for his soul. Art, he would say, is foolish—she works not for her own. All that his genius could express he gave, while he awaited, as live he must, whatever might be proffered in return—and who that truly gauges the tell-tale disproportion between the values of these two shall speak of human justice unperturbed.

At the close of this period of his life, after all that he had created of beauty for the world, he still was utterly poor, and would have been homeless but for the kindness of Mr. van Wisselingh, his constant friend, who took for Maris the rooms in St. John's Wood Terrace which he himself had previously occupied. Here the artist lived for nineteen years.

There were elements in English life, and in his surroundings here, that Matthew Maris liked, and parts of London to which he became attached; but once again, as in his departure from his native land, in quitting France for England he had left behind him many things of unrivalled beauty dear to such an artist's heart. It seems most certain that much that he experienced here tended to

accentuate still more deeply the tendency to pessimistic views of life that he had manifested even in his early youth. Although his work-room as described above was in no way adequate for his work, he showed no active will to move from it. Perhaps it was in part that continued disappointment had left him hopeless of ever finding the long-desired environment, certain it is that at the time of my first visits to him he seemed like one weary of seeking, embittered by all his own experience, and saddened most by all he knew of life's injustices, and that not for himself alone. When we consider his long sojourn in these rooms, the difficulty previously mentioned must not be overlooked of finding just the surroundings most suitable for one of such a nature and that would have been congenial, for he disliked conventional studios. He had also an extreme aversion to changing his abode, so that when once he was ensconced it was wellnigh impossible to persuade him to move. Perhaps, too, if any steps upon his own part might have brought about him conditions less unsuited to an artist's needs, they were such as he could not take. But whatever may have been the complication of causes from within and from without, Matthew Maris remained for nineteen years at 47 St. John's Wood Terrace, achieving—how should it have been otherwise—comparatively little work. Etching was quite impossible in his room, and on his leaving Cottier, the Cadart Press he had employed for printing had been sold, Maris retaining only copperplates and other requisites of the art, now useless to him. How can we turn from the consideration

of this period of his life without wondering, even though now it be but an idle speculation, what he might not have achieved through these long years, had his environment been proper to his needs?

On one of the earlier visits to Matthew Maris at St. John's Wood Terrace, finding it no longer possible to resist temptation, I asked if I might see some of his work, of which there was none ever visible about his room. This time, however, my desire was not to be gratified, he almost silently demurring. A little later, on my persisting gently, he at last gave way, and I remember with what feeling of delight I saw for the first time in his album the drawing of the cobbler and his wife, whose little workshop was in the same street that Matthew Maris lived in when at Antwerp. I recall, too, the fascination of its old-world atmosphere, how every inch of it was filled with interesting though so very simple work, and also its humanity and humorous suggestiveness. There was, besides, the drawing of boys bathing, with which, however, at some subsequent time he must have parted.

Next, and a little later still, it was the etching of "The Sower" that he showed to me, and as, kneeling on the floor, the print in front of me, I revelled in and wondered at its work, he told in part the history of its making. How he had found it difficult to free the large copperplate from grease and then to coat it uniformly as he did, using the solid wax and dabbers in the old-fashioned manner that is still the best. This done, and the object of his care slung from the ceiling in a cradle, he proceeded to the stage of

smoking its waxed surface. No sooner was this exciting task completed than, to his dismay, the heavy copper by some misadventure slipping from its cradle, fell fortunately edgewise to the floor. Hence, where it was sticking fast and upright in the boards, did Matthew Maris joyfully recover it.

With the actual etching he was occupied for some three months, but said that so great was the amount of work in it, so innumerable the multitude of fine lines, he felt he should be driven mad before completing it; and often he was only able to be engaged upon the plate for a few minutes at a time. This etching he frequently spoke of later, and reference to it will be made again—of all his work this seemed to hold his interest most deeply, and to the very end.

On many a day afterwards, together we would sit talking of the France he loved, of its old towns and villages, its architectural treasures, and of its gracious landscapes, looking the while at photographs or picture post-cards that depicted them, of which he possessed a considerable collection sent to him by various friends. He also would discover from their hiding places views that pleased him of the Gelderland, the scene of happy wanderings in a time long passed; and, in addition, photographs of quaint and interesting vestiges of the older Holland; of picturesque mills and millhouses, now, alas! swept away, and of canal sides whence the beauty of quiet waters had, to his great disgust, been banished in the name of health.

Matthew Maris now went out but little, and that most often in the evening, when the less definite aspect of the

streets was more agreeable to him, and it was more possible to imagine castles fading into the darkening sky, in place of sombre houses. He had been wont, not long before the time of our first meeting, to walk at night to the higher part of Hampstead where lived his friend Muhrmann, of whose work he had a high opinion. He always seemed to like this part of London—while the mere mention of the City, with its vast pressing throng intent on business, would ever fill him with aversion. But to the quieter thoroughfares he had not this violent objection, and could to a much later time find pleasure in glimpses of shop windows. Little commissions to be executed at chemist, tobacconist, or frame maker would still upon occasion draw him from his retreat. He had earlier been fond of making excursions into the country, to stay with Peppercorn and others, or to his friends Mr. and Mrs. E. J. van Wisselingh, who were living then at Pinner.

Only on two occasions at this time, when calling at St. John's Wood Terrace, did I encounter other visitors there. One day John Swan came in, and I remember him occupying the armchair beneath the window, wrapped in a capacious ulster, while Matthew Maris, statue-like, quite motionless and silent, sat at the window end of his work-table, his two hands clasped together and resting on it, his head bent slightly down. And I recall contrasting involuntarily in the fast fading light their two so different personalities, that seemed as the moments passed like two detached and palpable entities clearly manifest, filling

the stillness of the room. Something that Swan said in appreciation of the master I remember, and the pleasure that it gave to me. The lively, inconsequent jingling of a barrel-organ in the street close by the window, the sound of which never seemed irritating to Matthew Maris, had broken into the former calm, and Swan remarked: "He little knows that he is playing to an Old Master."

Matthew Maris seemed generally sadder in these days and in more serious and gloomy vein than later he appeared to be when living at Westbourne Square. Often his talk would turn to social questions on which, as years went by, his mind dwelt more and more. His sympathy was ever with the poor and the oppressed, and deeply he felt the sad existence of those lowest strata of our social order in the great towns, above whose dark horizon no sun would seem to rise. The thought of men thriving on the proceeds of sweated labour would arouse him to the deepest indignation; as would also recollection of the innumerable hosts of articles worthlessly bad in their construction, and bad in their effect, turned out into the world to sell.

Once, after he had been speaking with bitterness of his own life-work, and of the visible results of it, I ventured to remark: "But still you have the glory." "The glory," answered he with scorn, turning to me his face all solemn and impassioned with passing agitation, "what use is the glory to me?"

Most often now, as later, he was loth to hear a word of appreciation of his own paintings, calling them himself mere pot-boilers, in sad memory of their fate, and only

confessing once, after a prolonged encounter, that he had painted one of them at least with happiness—the one known as "Back Premises."

He had grown to feel increasingly that men sought his work more for its mere monetary value than for its artistic worth; and what consideration could have been more bitter than was this to him who had most truly, as later on he said, sacrificed all those things in life that most men seek and prize, the better that he might enshrine within the precious monument that he has left us, the finest essence of his soul. Was it not in part this same conviction that, in moods of pessimism, sometimes prompted him to quote the almost paralysing stricture he attributed to Voltaire: "Par un haut but fatal le bien le plus parfait devient la source du mal?"

Let me not, however, leave the reader with too sombre an impression of Matthew Maris, as of one dwelling most often in despondency. Not only did he have the joy of mastery of his art, but here, as in most of the circumstances of his life, he had within himself the power of a robust if quiet gladness, arising partly from his pure and healthy nature, partly from his native wit and humour, his large store of common humanity, and his love of all things and situations humorous in life, as well as in the world of books. He possessed the large power of extracting happiness from a simple life.

It was but a little while before the time of my first meeting with him that he had been wont to keep his friends up into the small hours of the morning, while he, knowing

no weariness, would brilliantly recount, with manner and with gesture all his own, fascinating story after story. The loss of sleep was seldom of much account to him, and, late as in his seventieth year a letter came from him saying he had retreated to his four-poster at " past seven in the marning airly " when he thought it was just time to go to bed; and on one occasion he said he had sat up and painted two pictures in a night. And when awake, how keenly wide awake he was—what glinting fire shone often in his pale blue eyes, that now intensely searching beneath knitted brows, anon would be set wide and calmly, as on some land afar.

In the winter of 1905-1906 there confronted Matthew Maris the necessity of adjusting his mind to that which was much more than disagreeable to him—a removal from St. John's Wood Terrace. The house in which he lived, and which had hitherto been tenanted by his good landlady, was to be sold, and afterwards she would be unable to act as housekeeper to him. The thought of the impending change much troubled him. If he had been hopeless years before of finding the surroundings he desired, still more so was he now; and he declared once in a state of deep despondency he knew he should die of starvation in some garret. Indeed, the finding of new quarters for him, with a room of suitable aspect and lighting for his work, and someone who could minister in homely fashion to his simple needs, was anything but an easy task, and for a while endeavours on the part of friends proved fruitless.

One day Matthew Maris, in company with his friend,

Mrs. van Wisselingh, came to where I lived, hoping I might be able to help them in a further search. He could not be induced to lunch, and, while it was proceeding, walked with me about the upper room discussing work; and later, as I stilled the inner cravings, he, sitting on a high stool patiently, brought wisdom to the feast. That finished, we sallied forth to see some rooms I had discovered near; but though their lighting was quite good, he did not like the " feeling " of them nor their situation, and finally drove away to inspect a likely flat that had been found by Mrs. Lessore, the widow of a friend of Paris days—Jules Lessore, the well-known water-colourist. Happily this flat in Westbourne Square found favour in the eyes of Matthew Maris—he liked its back north room with large high window away from noisy thoroughfares—the rest could be adapted to his needs. Thus the first part of his necessity was provided for—of the second, the housekeeper, more anon.

It chanced one afternoon I called at St. John's Wood Terrace just before Matthew Maris' departure thence. The room was all changed in aspect, and quite strange to me. It was almost entirely empty—the dark blind had been taken from the window, which now admitted an unwonted flood of light. The furniture had vanished, all but the mahogany sideboard against the southern wall; and, as I sat upon the window-sill, Matthew Maris was there busied in removing the dust from something with a brush of Lilliputian dimensions—a nail brush, I believe. Suddenly glancing upwards and thrusting out his arm,

he held to me a miniature dust-pan and its dark contents, with the simple ejaculation, "microbes." As mentioned, he had always been averse to allowing other than his own hands to interfere in any manner with the ordering of his work-room, disliking intensely that aught in it should be moved from its accustomed place. Thus such a quantity of dust had gathered there as he was unwilling to abandon, leaving his landlady more cleaning than he thought should properly fall to her share. He received with scorn and amusement suggestions of his friends that, if he lived in purer country air, he might be more robust, for truly as he said, he generally was in better health among his "microbes" than they were in their purer air.

Woe to the misguided individual who might endeavour to deflect Matthew Maris from his appointed course and time—to any who should seek to induce him to depart from accomplishing anything whatever at the rate and in the manner natural to him at the time—slender would be his chance of success—consuming lightnings might descend upon his head.

In the latter part of Matthew Maris' last day at St. John's Wood Terrace, Mr. van Wisselingh called to take him away to Northwood—but only after hours of waiting, though little was to do, could the master be dislodged from his depleted nest.

IV

THE interval, of some six weeks in all, between the time when Matthew Maris finally quitted his rooms in St. John's Wood Terrace and that of his initiation into his new and brighter home in Westbourne Square, was spent by him with his old friends Mr. and Mrs. van Wisselingh at Frithwood House, Northwood. Here much was to be done; the decoration and arrangement of his fresh quarters to be planned, his wardrobe to be replenished and treasures long stored for him by his friends, and for which he had found no place in his former rooms, to be brought forth to the light. Among these latter were the Rethel woodcuts he had acquired in Paris, that afterwards, mounted and framed for him by Henry Stubbins, were ranged alongside his bed. No garret was it that awaited him, in spite of his forebodings, and it was after all with some sense of relief and of fresh hope that he left behind him the long, strange, shadowed years spent at St. John's Wood Terrace. Most certainly it seemed to me that, on the whole, he was markedly happier in his new abode than I had ever known him in the old, where, having finally abandoned the idea that he could ever find a suitable work-place, he had looked forward but to uncertainty and darkness. With the window of his new work-room he was quite satisfied, and used to say it was a miracle so good a one had been found for him.

During his sojourn at Frithwood House Matthew Maris took delight in wandering through its charming garden, but the part of it he most was fond of was a wild uncultivated corner where tall trees grew unchecked and close, and all was free and natural. But even to this temporary haven of beauty and repose must Matthew Maris bring his Spartan rule! Well do I remember a small tea-party at which, in the absence of his hostess, he was presiding genius. It took place in the library, where, though it was but early spring, and very cold, the fire at his command had vanished, a window was pitilessly open, and the tea to his desire was much too strong—and not without difficulty did the spirit's satisfaction rise above the discomforts of the flesh.

One wicked story must be told of him. It was a day when many guests were gathered in the drawing-room, and among them the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Darlow, the former of whom was then secretary of the Bible Society and interested in the production of a Dutch edition of the Bible, in connection with which he was desirous of obtaining some information. Matthew Maris listened for a while with interest to his discourse, until at length it chanced a harmless word of Greek fell from the scholar's lips. At this show of "high learning," Maris, furious, vanished from the room. After a long absence, however, approaching from the garden a small open casement near which his hostess and some friends were sitting, he was to be seen in a large straw hat, his hand up to his mouth, and heard, too, asking in most audible whisper: "Have those people

gone?"—and they had not. The conclusion is most characteristic of him. Returning at the hostess's bidding, he once more joined the company, charming in his manner, as though he had known the offending ones for years, sought to delay them in their departure, and eventually accompanied them along the drive.

It was necessary to seek a housekeeper for Matthew Maris in his new abode, and here were the Fates propitious. It was found possible to enlist for him the services of Mrs. Armstrong, cousin of his former landlady, Mrs. Biggs. Not only did she set his house in order, but her simple care, constant faithful devotion, and patient forbearance did much towards keeping about Matthew Maris in his later years the sense of quiet homeliness that he so much desired. Although her duties were comparatively few and simple, Matthew Maris being utterly unselfish, yet was her task not always of the easiest, for he required much understanding. The irritability, the depth, and the comparative complexity of all that related to the artist in him were often in strong contrast to the extreme simplicity of the man, and the change from one to the other would take place often with lightning-like rapidity, and be perplexing naturally to one of simpler mould. But if now and then with his humorous manner or in other wise he would make himself incomprehensible to the " good soul," as he invariably called her, and would at times be caustic and impatient, how quickly he melted to regret. Mrs. Armstrong carefully preserves a few lines which he copied out and gave to her not very long before his death. These

more than once he read to me, and in a measure they express the appreciation and regard in which he ever held her kindly nature. I give them here for those who care to read.

" O simple loving heart that thinkest no evil—the world is better for such hearts, despite their exceeding simpleness. There is something touching—something almost sublime in their credulity, that makes the wisdom of wiser people bow down and take a second place in their presence."

V

BELIEVING that they may prove of interest to many readers, I think it desirable to record such of the master's views upon art teaching and art work in general as he from time to time expressed to me. And as it was while he still lived at St. John's Wood Terrace that most of the talks upon these themes took place, it seems perhaps not unnatural to introduce the substance of them here, before passing to the consideration of that last period of his life spent by him at Westbourne Square.

In the first place, he believed all early art training should be kept exceedingly simple, and was opposed to the introduction of all unnecessary complications, or of technical expressions that might easily tend to the obscuring of large and simple underlying principles. He mentioned for example the use of the word "tone" as implying something different from colour—for sometimes this term is used in such a sense as fundamentally to signify what in reality is simply colour. Also what is understood as change of tone in any colour area generally involves an actual change of colour too; and lastly the word is used, perhaps most often, to express a conception that involves relationships of intensities of brightness. The term is thus too complex in significance, and often too vaguely used to render advisable its introduction to the beginner.

Matthew Maris said he thought the first step of the beginning painter should be the copying of some simple object with the utmost possible exactitude as to apparent form and colour.

He considered it also most desirable that every possible chance should be given to the young student of duly developing whatever imagination or original power he might possess within himself—that care should be taken not to check the naturalness of the beginner; and much of art training as generally understood and practised found disfavour in his eyes, as he felt its effect must be prejudicial considered from this point of view.

In spite of the most careful attention that Matthew Maris had himself given to the learning of anatomy in earlier years, he came at last to think much danger lay in the injudicious pursuit of this branch of art study. It is most likely he was the more confirmed in the rather extreme views upon this matter that he held in later life, from his having come in contact with much art work that was near to being more a mere demonstration of the artist's knowledge of anatomy than an inevitable expression of something from his inner being, in which that knowledge had been relegated to its proper and subordinate place. To Matthew Maris such work was but a source of irritation. I remember how once, on my bringing a drawing to show to him, he exclaimed before looking at it, and almost fiercely, he hoped there were no " bones " in it.

On my saying to him once, *à propos* of what I do not

now recall, words to the effect that an artist must study Nature, he said with deepest emphasis: "You must *feel* Nature." This latter I had taken for granted, though he had not realized it; and so great was his then aversion to mere "study" as a something done rather with the head than with love out of the heart, that he had objected to such a meaning of the word as he thought I had intended. Amongst his own early work some will be found showing he too believed in the study of Nature, and that of the most serious kind. But his wish was only to lay stress on what he knew to lie at the foundation of all the finest work in art, *i.e.*, depth and truth of feeling.

Yet he was very impatient of the common use of the phrase "true to Nature," so often made excuse for many an untruth in art.

With regard to figure drawing, he felt that fine proportion never could be obtained, and that one never should seek attainment of it, by copying from models; for the sense of proportion can come only from within, out of the intuition of the artist's mind, and is a matter to be decided by his inner perceptive faculty. Elaborate measurements of supposed typical models, and taking of averages, however interesting it might be scientifically, was to him ridiculous from the artist's point of view. He thought that it might be of help to the beginner to have figures badly drawn and out of proportion set before him for correction, to ascertain what innate sense of proportion he might possess, and so to train it.

For himself he felt it was necessary, in oil-painting

especially, to be able to work on with hardly any intermission for some four or five hours at least; and also he set most store by what he styled "the last hand," by which he meant those final hours of working all over one's canvas which to his mind made or marred the masterpiece.

He was very strongly of the opinion that before all things the artist should be himself, and many a time said his advice to any such would be: "Do it (*i.e.*, your work) badly (if needs must)—only, be yourself."

He believed and frequently would say that in art one must work hard and work incessantly, and never wait till inspiration came.

In art work that was achieved too easily he had but little faith. In seeking out a new way for oneself, he felt one must go deep down, shirking no difficulty, attaining one's precious metal with labour, as ore is brought to daylight from a mine. Not seldom would he speak of the difficulties of art work, and of its heart-breaking disappointments; and of how after working at one time for three or four years on a picture, he had ended in destroying it. This recalls a little anecdote relating to John Swan and himself that I cannot refrain from mentioning. One day, when Swan, who had been admiring one of Matthew Maris' pictures, asked him how a certain effect in it had been obtained, said Maris: "Swan, you have to go to Hell for it!"

He would express surprise at anyone asking, as not infrequently happens, how such and such a colour should be obtained; for no real recipe can ever, of course, be given,

the final determining factor as to the amounts of various components resting with the artist's feeling only, and never in the nature of things being communicable to another person.

Matthew Maris felt that in the larger sense one could not really *learn* to draw or paint at all. It should be noted that he thought in general that no amount of study or of learning—" high learning," as in half mockery he at times would call it—could ever for a moment take the place of natural depth of feeling and intuitive insight, hence his amusement with, and sometimes contempt for, those among artists or art critics whom, in their disregard of this truth, he was wont to call the " wisdomers " or " wisdom-beasts."

Sometimes, in connection with art work, Matthew Maris would recall with pleasure a proverb he thought to be of old Japan, that much appealed to him: "If you want to do anything in a hurry, go to bed!"

Finally, it is interesting to note how, in regard to the necessity upon the artist's part for constant work if he would attain to mastery, the thoughts of Matthew Maris were in accord with those expressed in the words of Blake: " Without unceasing Practice, nothing can be done: Practice is Art. If you leave off, you are lost."

PART II
WESTBOURNE SQUARE

MATTHEW MARIS

I

IN the spring of 1906, Matthew Maris, leaving Frithwood House, which he never was to see again, came to his little flat at 18 Westbourne Square. Here all had been prepared for him, and here began, if not that time of calm untroubled happiness one could have wished for him, a time at least when he could work again, when he might feel once more the spell of incompleted harmonies; hope, too, to embody in their final shapes dreams whose elusive forms were dimly fixed on canvases of earlier years. How far this hope was satisfied will later on be seen, and how at times the sad spirit of disappointment, like a pursuing spectre, reigned within the shadowed stillness of his rooms.

At this time of his life—perhaps always—he was very sensitive, and averse from any change in his surroundings, and there is no knowing, but for the necessity that compelled his moving, how long he might have yet remained at St. John's Wood Terrace. One of the first things I remember his speaking of in his new quarters was the considerable time it took him to feel "at home" there; also of how difficult it was to work before one had grown quite accustomed to new surroundings; and also that for some while he had no liking whatever for his food. He would protest too that his new home was all "too smart" and fine for him, as though he had desired something simpler still.

Though certainly it was part of his ideal to lead a simple and a Spartan life of self-denial, there is no doubt that he was much attached to all the beautiful objects about him in his sitting-room, and that the fine taste in which it was ordered was a source of satisfaction to him.

Two rooms of the flat were exclusively devoted to the master's use, both of them happily upon the second floor. Mrs. Armstrong's kitchen sitting-room was on the floor below, its door upon the landing, and the ascent from it of a single flight of stairs would bring one to two swinging doors, part glass—the "oak" of Matthew Maris' retreat. And if upon that stair there hovered some little sense of saddening gloom, how speedily did its dominion cease when those two magic doors were passed. They gave upon a miniature vestibule where two more doors were seen, both always standing wide; the one upon the left led to the master's work-room, the second to what he called his "grand salon," but both into a wonderland that shut away the world, into a realm where strife and ugliness, untruth and self, were all alike forgot. As the word "studio," with much that it generally implies, was utterly distasteful to Matthew Maris, I shall not employ it here.

Of these two rooms it was the work-room that he preferred, and there that he spent the chief part of his time. He liked its atmosphere of work—its appearance more ascetic and severe. Of set purpose it was kept quite simple, the less to divert attention as he worked. The walls were low in tone, and many of the objects it contained were inconspicuous in dim shadowed corners, so that as

one stood before the easel with glance directed upon a canvas, one saw but little else, was conscious of the canvas only, and nothing but warm, dim background all around. It was besides his "sanctum," where, work done, he rested with his pipe, conning some favourite book; here too was his little intimate "nest," of which more later, where, the day being over, he sat or stood to read or write when others were abed.

It was in the salon that the most part of his visitors were entertained, that his evening meal was brought, and that he rested in his four-post bed; there too that the last months of his life were chiefly spent; there that he passed away.

First let us enter at the left-hand door—that portal where domestic tyranny was challenged, nay, repulsed—within whose inviolable threshold was ever to be found just that uncertain indefinable commingling of order and disorder, cleanliness and dust, that, though its virtues are so patent to many an artist's soul, fills the good housewife's spirit with dismay. Here nothing might be moved or touched by any save himself, and here when it was needful he would even lay and light the fire in his little stove himself. As one advances gently it is a sense of darkness that assails one first—a tall green screen upon one's left, mostly unfolded, casting its shadow over floor and wall. For one within the room this made a pleasant background, and stayed the too sudden inroad of a guest, adding besides a touch of mystery and seclusion that Matthew Maris liked. Immediately upon one's right a case one hardly

notices, holding unfinished canvases, stands in the shade against the wall. In front, in the room's next angle, a cupboard looms, tall, brown, and inconspicuous, containing his wardrobe and his thick warm military ulster that breathes of Paris days.

Upon its top presides a goddess—Venus of Melos—mellowed well with age, a spinning wheel of old brown wood beside her, and on the right a pewter plate unpolished, which leans against the wall.

It was but a small chamber that one came into beyond, and happily so, for in a larger Matthew Maris would, as he said, have felt his loneliness. It held all that was needed for his work. Beyond the screen's end, next the cupboard, came the dark fireplace, innocent of fire; between which and the former two prints unframed were fixed upon the wall. The lower, an "Entombment," gracious with flowing lines, above it the portrait of some cavalier in beaver hat—both prints very low in tone, originally dark, especially the latter, and darkened much with age. A smaller print of children, from some antique, was fixed upon the left side of the cupboard. The mantelpiece of sombre golden brown was covered with a profusion of small objects, conspicuous among which were two small plaster casts—the one a most wise-seeming elephant from an Indian original, given to Matthew Maris by John Swan; the other, the seated nude figure of a man—neither more than three inches in height. Besides these, and between them, stood a number of small bottles, once full of amber varnish or of oil, sometimes a palette knife astray. A portrait of

three-quarter length in oil, in colour mostly dark rich velvety brown, which he called his Rembrandt, filled in its well-toned frame the space above.

Upon the floor between the cupboard and the fireplace were a few small canvases that leaned against the wall. On the hearth a little gas ring, that quickly used to set his kettle singing.

Upon the mantel's other side, that near the window, and on a golden space of wall which the light struck happily, gleamed out a plaster plaque of Flaxman's "Night," cracked and rejoined, but full of tender grace; also a small landscape hung there, painted by a friend; below, a little tray of metal, Japanese work appropriately framed in mellowed wood. Upon the floor below, in shadow, a small drawing-board would rest. This space was on the right hand of his " nest " or favourite corner, that little inner sanctum between the high window and the eastern wall. A long and narrow curtain, hanging from near the ceiling, projected from the window's edge out into the room—this drawn, he was cut off from all the world. Here he would write or read, standing or sometimes sitting at his little table, whereon were desk and lamp, the last turned low at night and shaded well—with books and letters, pipes and matches, cuttings, and now and then a knife or tool; while above them and in front, the porch of Rouen Cathedral upon the wall showed dimly in the deep mysterious shade. He was most fond of lamp-light, feeling it intimate and homely, and also least harmful to his eyes.

Then, in the northern wall, his window came, tall and

broad enough, its lower part obscured by a dark blind; its upper, most often open, admitting just the stream of light he liked for work. And from the window's upper margin there projected near the ceiling a dark screen, making a little angle with it, so as to prevent reflected light coming from the white ceiling to his work below, as it was just in one determinate beam of light that he preferred to paint, with nothing near to give off scattered rays.

Beneath the window, and shadowed by its blind, there stood the little Chesterfield settee, seldom by him put to the wonted purpose of such things, but serving as receptacle for books and papers stacked at the convenient end, or strewn about it. There, too, often lay a paint-rag and the little mirror by means of which he could regard his work reversed. A little space was left on which a friend might sit—and often did. Next to the window, in the room's shaded angle, stood a camp washing-bowl, surmounted by an architectural photograph upon the wall—and two more smaller photographs, one of an Eros and Psyche, the other of some peaceful river scene in France, were fixed upon the narrow facet which cut off the actual angle of the walls.

The space between this corner and the door was bare save for a hanging pine cone, and on the floor beneath were several canvases, some framed, that leaned against the wall and one another.

This brings us once more to the screen, whose dull green surface, lighted by the window, was agreeable for one's eyes to rest upon.

Within the space between the screen, the fireplace, and the window, and at an angle to the latter, there stood the master's easel, always in the same position, an old oil colour box beneath it, and, at its right, a little oblong table covered with a green cloth, holding a few small objects needful for his work; a jug of drinking water often was there too, and trays for ashes of the weed.

A small coal stove, reluctantly accepted at pressure of his friends, stood on his hearth, and though at times its glow relieved the winter's chill, scarcely ever would it be lighted for himself.

Usually a four-legged stool was to be seen on the green floor between the sofa and the "nest," piled high with papers, old copies of the "Studio," and books—a direful losing-place, where letters, cuttings, and the like, once placed for temporary harbourage, were hard to be come at again, the search for them with its accompaniment suggesting faintly that ideal one of Beethoven for the vanished penny.

A tin or two of oil to feed his lamps, and a larger standard lamp for general illumination and for working at night, completed, save for the innumerable nothings that will accumulate, the equipment of his room. One thing I have omitted. Within the little dark space that was between the door and the beginning of the screen on entering reposed his old portfolio, but seldom moved, together with a large-sized drawing-board.

Such was the room that Matthew Maris called his "work-shop," where, to within the last year of his life, he daily

worked, thought, read, or wrote, and dreamed his dreams, spending there the most part of his time, and in the main, I think we may believe it, happily. Perhaps not in itself a cheerful room—a little sad, a little much perhaps there was of that dim brownish gloom of London's winter time, and yet how full of life, vivacity, and unique charm it seemed when his strong personality illumined it! How there pervaded it the true atmosphere and spirit of art work—the poignant feeling of its joys, its hard-won triumphs, its sacrifice, and its despair! His work-room window, its lower two-thirds or more obscured, admitted no vision of the outer world save from the floor space farthest from it, and thence but of house and chimney tops, and the summit of a tree; and it was wonderful that, going out so little as he did, being so cut off from outer nature and the world, and bearing so many hours of loneliness, he remained as vigorous in mind and body, and as cheerful as he did. What testimony to the purity and vigour of his inward fire, his natural sanity and wholesomeness, and of that spacious inner realm that he possessed wherein to wander.

His visitors were few, the time that any one of them could spend with him quite short compared with the long hours of a day.

Certain it is he not infrequently would feel his loneliness, and sometimes with alluring converse, sights of interesting prints, and readings from the books he loved, would seek to hinder the departing friend—and then again he would complain of time's too speedy flight—witness this extract from a letter:

" . . . If only you could have a hand in stopping this here flying time, I don't know where it goes, but go it does, and every day it goes faster, faster. I've got a clock opposite my window which strikes every two minutes a quarter. . . ."

But I anticipate. First let us see, to picture his complete environment, the master's second room, that which at times, remembering smiling France, he jestingly would call his " grand salon." It was a simple room belonging wholly to no time nor place, yet one that at first glance proclaimed itself the home of some distinctive personality. It had a tranquil ordered gravity, almost austere; a dignity, yet with no formal touch, as of fine things set by an artist's hand to quiet melody.

In its arrangement, nearing the severe, its mellowness of tone, and its sobriety, it seemed part Dutch—some of its chairs, too, built on an old Dutch plan—and partly it was subtly French in atmosphere—less English—nor did there lack a hint of gracious Italy.

On entering, the light came from one's right—a large high window looked towards the south, in part upon a drear drab cliff of house wall opposite, in part upon the trees and houses of the " square "; but more upon a pleasant sky space, into whose lower part above the window's sill the roofs of houses, chimney stacks and pots thrust out a little way in friendly, homely ugliness, leading one's eye to where a far-away horizon stretched of London's sea. The noise of jingling milk-cans rose often from below, the sound of children's voices, and the tramp of passing feet; at times suggestive murmurings of that faster human stream that flowed unceasingly hard by.

Long heavy curtains of delicate grey-green at the window were partly drawn to moderate the light: that on one's left hung straight, the right, held back, passed in a graceful curve across the back of a small chair kept always set there for the purpose, aslant to the adjacent wall.

Blinds of a gold-brown linen were at times pulled down to further dim the light, and in the lower left division of the casement hung a transparency of Durer's "Dancing Peasants" or "Le Branle."

Near the room's centre was a round gate-table, solid yet elegant, and polished like a mirror, upon whose gleaming top but little stood, giving a feeling of repose. Sometimes a glass of flowers would be there, perhaps of the iris that he loved—at times a dwarf tree from Japan; a little lamp, too, in the winter days to light his evening meal. Beneath the table, and always in its place, there stood a small carved stool. Here order reigned and perfect cleanliness, and not a crumb might stray upon its surface, or fall upon the floor, but forthwith it was quickly garnered in.

The walls were of a cool refreshing green, with measured satin stripe, recalling those one often sees in France. The carpet was green too, a soft grey-green, and inconspicuously patterned.

Upon one's right on entering, midway along the western wall, between the window and the door, there was an ample cabinet fashioned by French hands, well proportioned, generously carved, dark brown, and quite unpolished. Its nearer end was softly shadowed by the window's light,

and shadowed too were all the projecting masses of its carving. Upon the top of it were grouped some old Venetian glass, a china bowl or two, a model of an ancient hanap, and some small old figures carved of wood; whilst over it upon the centre of the wall, and dominating all, there hung the Calamatta print of "Mona Lisa," framed in warm oak with large and well-toned mount, its line work softened by super-added work of Matthew Maris' hand. Smilingly she looked down, and one was conscious of that smile as deep as Leonardo's mind, of the placidity of those so living hands, and of the gentle glow of light beneath her throat; and her mild radiance and spirit seemed to be diffused and fall on all around.

On either side of her, not far way, and lower on the wall, were hung two Rethel woodcuts; that on the left, and near the window, Death fiddling at the Ball, the guests in flight—this, too, had Matthew Maris worked upon. That on the right and near the door, Death in the belfry ringing the last knell—the old sacristan dead within his chair, the peaceful rays of the low setting sun entering at the opened window.

On this side also was a fine work by Peppercorn, dark trees at night, and moonlight glimmering on a pool below, that Matthew Maris spoke of with much admiration. Lower, an unframed photograph of St. Denis was fixed upon the wall almost in the cupboard's shadow, and on the floor beneath it stood one of the three smaller chairs.

Next to the window, but so shadowed as scarce to attract attention, was a small closed wash-hand-stand, and over

it two Hiroshige colour prints—one of dark masts against a sea and sky of blue, with hard yet far horizon; the second, I think, of iris flowers. This brings us to the long eastern wall which faced one upon entering at the door. Here was a simple English mantelpiece of plain white marble, with upright fender of pierced brass. Upon the mantelshelf a few small *objets d'art* were happily arranged: a little three-legged bronze of loose free work, which often held a flowering artichoke's dried head, all spiney, hard, and brown, that Matthew Maris liked, a tea-box of carved ivory, and candlesticks of brass and bronze.

Above, upon the wall, and tilted slightly forward, there hung a large French mirror, within whose hollowed width of mellow wooden frame, severely built, were beautifully spaced carved fruit and leaves.

On either side the fireplace, and set low, were two framed reproductions—that on the right of one of Claude le Lorrain's poetic landscapes, that on the left of Raphael's composition of the Plague; and over this, a photograph, all warm and rich in tone, with dark grey mount, of Andrea del Sarto's "Holy Family"—of all the pictures in the National Gallery that which Matthew Maris loved the most. Two plates there were besides upon the wall, one on each side of the mantelpiece, upon the left of which hung also an Italian sconce.

Next came the bed, so little like a modern one that hardly was one conscious of its purpose. It was a narrow, single, four-post one with canopy and silken coverlet of green—a couch that might have held one of the little

princes of his dreams—its wood quite dark, and rich with florid carving by French hands, and all suggestive of some château far away. It stood against the northern wall but not quite touching it, a space that one might walk in being left. Its foot was near one as one came into the room—its head against the farther eastern wall, on which was fixed above the pillow a portrait of Henry VIII unframed, and reproduced from Holbein's masterpiece.

Alongside the bed, ranged at eye-level on the northern wall, in line unbroken, their frames in actual touch, there hung the Rethel woodcuts, Death's grim Progress, *à propos* the French Revolution. Their bold, assured, and splendid draughtsmanship, their composition, life, and strength, appealed to Matthew Maris forcibly, and often would he point their virtues out to friends. Nor was it for artistic qualities in the narrower sense alone that he so much admired them, but also for their human significance.

Within the small space between the opened door and bed, a chair was set against the wall, very simple and severe in style, copied by careful hands from the old seventeenth-century Dutch one that Matthew Maris had previously possessed. A second one, its fellow, stood back against the bed and at its foot, and thence was sometimes moved to the round table. At the bed's head a smaller French chair was placed, similar in tone though far less excellent in design.

Not strong the light that found its way into the master's chamber, and thus, subdued, restrained, sedate it ever seemed—something remote from all the world around,

but not without the note of quiet joy, the lightsome touch of elegant pure taste, with sweet, refreshing green of walls and floor.

Some little sense of mystery was there, and of reserve, as of a treasure house where more lay hid than met the eye's first gaze. It was in harmony with much within the painter's self, with just that touch of the *macabre*—the Rethels—to satisfy his pessimistic vein.

As has been mentioned, Matthew Maris not infrequently would say this room especially was all too fine for him, and though he grew very much attached to it and to all that it contained, and although its ordering gave satisfaction to his most critical fine taste, yet it would seem that not seldom he was inclined to reproach himself for living in surroundings wearing too much an air of luxury quite to satisfy his ideal of Spartan and unselfish simplicity of life. The following short extract from one of his letters rather confirms this view:

" It is a hard job to find a suitable place to work in, in this forest of chimney pots and bricks . . . the only objection I have against it is that this accident happened in such a swell neighbourhood . . . besides it all has the appearance as if I'm setting up as a fashionable painter. Well, all this furnishing is not my doing. It looks so selfish, as if I'm smartening myself up at the expense of others. . . ."

This from the man whom someone once described as " all for self and pelf." What charge more utterly grotesque in its inaptness could ever have been devised!

II

IN the surroundings which I have sought to picture in the foregoing pages were passed the last eleven years of Matthew Maris' life. And outwardly it was a simple life in every way. He made no more those expeditions into the country to visit friends he had been wont to take not long before the time when I first met him. He did not often quit his hermitage to wander forth at all, save for an occasional evening visit to acquaintances near by, or to a small tobacconist's and newsvendor's shop in the adjoining street for packets of his favourite weed, either to send away to others or to consume within the small bowl of his consoling pipe. He was not an early riser in these days, and after his slight breakfast worked while there was light, and often on winter evenings by the shaded glow of a large standard lamp. Midday a bowl of cocoa served for his repast, and often as he worked and at other times he smoked his favourite small pipes, charged with the mildest of tobaccos—sometimes of his own procuring, sometimes sent to him by friends, as also were many of what he called his "pipeikies." There was for him a soothing friendly homeliness about the pipe he never found in any other form of smoking, and many were his eulogies upon the virtues of the weed, and often would he tell of straits to which he had been driven seeking a substitute in times of need.

" . . . For my little pipeikie is a great friend of mine, and feels itself very pleased and comfortable."

" . . . If the wise King Solomon had known about pipeikies he would not have overlooked them."

" . . . Often my taste has undergone many hardships in my wandering vicissitudes; but of all the agreement-ingredients, I fancy the leaves of roses and dried ivy I liked the least."

He was, as ever, fond of reading—but this will be considered later—friends and acquaintances keeping him well supplied with books and papers; and in addition, upon the lower shelf within his cabinet, there reposed a little library of books, his own, that he had long possessed. The happiest moments, he sometimes would aver, in all the day were those when, having worked and taken his refreshment, he rested reading, with his pipeikie—but also that if one's work had not gone well, and nothing was achieved, then one must end one's day unhappily.

Visitors, never numerous in these days, stayed with him usually more than a little while—brief intercourse of the nature of ordinary social " calls " being altogether distasteful to him. Admitted by the " good soul " at the street door below, their arrival was made known by her to Matthew Maris, and then they were ushered into the sitting-room most usually—but few into the domain of his work. Some came for help, and seldom left without it—few could tarry in his presence there without enlightenment—and for the body, too, there never lacked refreshment.

As the light faded from the winter sky, and often

earlier, he would begin to trim his lamp or lamps, attending to this humble work with as minute a care as though he were engaged upon some precious masterpiece, a care that no housewife could have rivalled, even of his native land, and never was he satisfied until the wick was absolutely even, and glass was crystal clear.

Then to the " salon " the good soul brought his evening meal, which he, when well, partook of always standing, returning to the work-room afterwards, where in a strange and tranquil world of deep mysterious shadows thrown and relieved by the warm, dim glowing of his shaded lamps, he worked, read, smoked, and corresponded, often into the small hours of the morning—this, too, as well in winter as in summer time, and with no heating of his chilly room but that emitted by his lamps.

" . . . Half past five (a.m.) just struck,—lamp goes out!" comes as a sort of postscript to one letter.

From time to time arrived letters and many packages for him—books, reproductions, gifts of tobacco, or delicacies from his friends at Northwood that he generally referred to indiscriminately as " tarts and pies." Occasionally a box of Dutch cigars, or bag of mild tobacco from his native land, or tin of choicest cocoa not otherwhere obtainable. Thence also at St. Nicholas' Eve, the evening of the 6th day of December, large boxes made their appearance, holding the amusing figures in ginger-shortbread named after the Saint, figures some two feet in height, a gentleman and lady fashioned exactly as in Rembrandt's day and earlier; flat effigies, bedecked with

gold, one with a watch, I think, and very fit to eat. And then, too, there were the "letters" in marzipan. Many an excellent repast do I remember, consisting of this ginger cake and draughts of ginger wine.

But let me recall a visit to the flat. It is a winter afternoon, most likely raining—it was a little jest between us that I always came on rainy days—and, after two rings at the electric bell, the door into the street is opened by the "good soul," always smiling—sometimes, alas! complaining of rheumatics! Together we ascend the gloomy stairway to her door, there, after a little talking, part. Climbing the next flight, if it should chance to be one of the painter's happy days, I hear a light and cheerful sound: the master is singing at his easel. Passing quietly the outer swinging doors I come upon his work-room door wide open, make some sound, rapping upon it perhaps in imitation of French drum-taps on the march, and from the dim interior of the room a voice is heard most likely saying: "You get awa' wi' ye!" after which invitation I enter and, looking round the last leaf of the screen, see at first nothing but the window's light, the painter being hid behind his easel, just finishing his work, perhaps removing board or canvas from its place. Not always so, however—often he left it there, and we regarded it together, he telling of its many changes and the difficulties encountered in bringing the composition as he wished. A vigorous handshake generally followed—a little asking after health—a little mild complaining of tired arm, or feet grown weary with long standing—always on happier

days a smile, and gleam of light from eyes often part hidden by a paper shade. Then he would vanish noiselessly, entering the " salon," from which he presently emerged burdened with one of the Dutch chairs—this he would call the throne, and set between the easel and the window was my appointed place. But sometimes I might sit within the " clearing " on the settee underneath the window, whence a little current of cold air flowed with discouraging persistence down one's back—and for protection he would bring the military ulster from its hiding-place, wrapping it about my shoulders. If it is very cold he lights a fire in the stove, exclaiming, " You wait a bittie, man!" or " Now you will be happy, man!" and soon, its cheeks aglow, an unwonted and most agreeable warmness steals through the icy room. Soon, too, small pipes are smouldering, and he is standing at his " nest," part hid by the long falling curtain, turned towards the window and its glow, with head thrown backward, hand up to his pipe, and keen eyes looking down intently. Now, at the memory of some long past prank or at some humorous story he has been telling, his head is thrown still farther back, his eyes almost closed, his lips parted, and his whole figure shakes with peals of light and happy laughter, that break the erstwhile stillness of his room.

Anon the converse takes a serious turn, and into the deeps of art, religion, letters, or philosophy he plunges; always profound, with insight of a sage—but of the substance of these many talks more shall be later told.

How fine he looked as often he stood there, his face

agleam against the gold-brown background of the wall that passed into the deeper shade beyond, its powerful chiselling thrown into clear relief beneath the window's light. Though he was very short in stature, and the upper part of his back was slightly bent forward from his deformity, his figure, with his strong broad shoulders and his massive head, was full of dignity. His forehead broadened upward and was wide and high, inclining gently back—his hair above it, of a goldish white, flowed back in flame-like curves or waves. His eyes of a pale blue that from beneath strong brows now sparkled with a gentle merriment, now spoke with endured sadness, and that at times could pierce like keenest arrows through any outer mask into one's soul, were never under any circumstances cold in their expression. His balanced mouth that oftenest bore the impress of serenity when his lips were closed, could yet in stress of anger become agitated with extreme unrest. His jaw and chin, though strong, were not too emphasized —all bore the stamp of noble nature and of power. Expressive as his face and figure often were of gentleness, nay even sometimes of timidity, so did the force and largeness of his nature show through them, and such was his native dignity, that none could have ever dared to take a liberty with him.

In these communings with him the body's needs are never once forgotten, either cup and saucer and tin of cocoa are forthcoming from their hiding place, and with the assistance of the gas-ring he compounds a steaming nectar, asking in memory of past mistakes as to its strength

if " any complaints are to be brought forward," or there enters the " good soul " with laden tray, where tea and bread and butter vie in temptingness with one another. I thank her—and he in gentle mockery exclaims: " There, you see how polite he is!"

After refreshment come the pipes once more, and talk both grave and gay, sometimes diversified with fragments of a song, or stories of his life's vicissitudes—recitations, frequently from Burns, or selections from the large collection of extracts he has made of chosen passages from many books. Often he reads pages from his little volume of Erasmus' " Eloge de la Folie," and now and then surprises me with his memory by quoting many lines from Shakespeare, or ancient thoughts of wisdom from the East.

How quickly the moments fly—two hours seem hardly half of one—and it is time to leave. At sign of preparations for departing he demurs, and it is doubly hard to come away. Often, when well, he would accompany me out to the swinging door, not seldom with some parting pleasantry, but sometimes, after there had been storms, we parted with only a sort of mutual low growl. The door closed with a little thud, and taking leave of the " good soul " on the way, I would be once more all regretfully in contact with the outer world, how different, below.

But there were darker days on which no singing greeted one upon the stair, when, on entering his work-room, it would be evident that he was troubled and unhappy. His face looked tired, wanting its usual fire; he barely spoke at first, and there would be no mutual greeting.

After a little while, however, he usually would talk of that which troubled him—failure to achieve his work, perhaps, worries connected with past work, or importunities on the part of various people. Often no long time would elapse before a gentle song broke forth, and sunshine once more, though not always, for a time at least filled his room.

It is strange to think for a moment on the contrast between what anyone unacquainted with Matthew Maris might have imagined to be the nature of the man who painted the joyous canvas of the reclining girl and butterflies, or "Feeding Chickens," the man who had created so many exquisite drawings of children, and Matthew Maris as sometimes I saw him, storm winds sweeping over him and thunders of indignation resounding in his usually so peaceful room. But if the passion in his soul was sometimes deep as that wonderful feeling manifested in his art, so also was his unexampled tenderness.

Sometimes I would tarry with him longer, till a step was heard upon the stair, and clicking of the outer door; and then a voice, issuing from behind the screen, proclaimed, "Your supper is ready, Mr. Maris." It was the "good soul" with his evening meal. But only with difficulty is he at last persuaded to forsake the nest and give attention to the fast-cooling feast. I sit beside him at the table where he always stands as he eats, the while he dispenses wisdom, gloomy or cheerful as may be. Now I see him in his work-room corner. It is past the hour to go; he knows it, but there in the light oasis from his lamp,

he with his small figure bending forwards and head down, turned part away from me, reads quickly on, line after line of his Erasmus, with no regard for time. One day, when he had been railing at the world more than usually, I told to him on retiring the story of the Quaker and his wife: "All the world 's queer but thee and me, and thee 's a bit queer"—and following me to the door he was unable to refrain from breaking into laughter. The memory of one more occasion comes to me. It was in his sitting-room. A youngish man was there, in difficulty I think, seeking Matthew Maris' help. He was seated at the window side of the round table, I at that nearest to the bed; and between us stood Matthew Maris, his back to the cabinet, drumming from time to time with finger-nails or knuckles on the table-top. So continued and so sweeping became his condemnations of the world that at last I could no longer resist a smile. Rapidly darting towards me: "And *you* laugh," he said, and his knuckles were now rapping on my head.

It will be necessary later to tell of sadder days when gradually failing health compelled him to spend most of his time within the "salon"—visiting his work-room but occasionally; but first let us dwell awhile on the consideration of his work at Westbourne Square.

III

TO no new work did Matthew Maris turn at Westbourne Square—it was too late. About his room were several canvases, and some, including those of dim and exquisite woodland glades, he never worked upon, and would not even clean and varnish. Those upon which he was engaged were leaned against the blank space of his wall, betwixt the door and window, and with them the expectant frame for a large charcoal drawing, hidden upon its board behind the screen.

Three, perhaps four, works in especial would occupy him now—all had been many years in hand—and at this phase he chose to spend long periods truly living in his work, striving perpetually to perfect it in its texture or composition, to imbue it with the very substance of his soul, and never resting satisfied with any result that he obtained.

These four were: the drawing of the sisters Westmacott; "The Child with Butterflies"; a third of a girlish figure in a graceful forward curve with arms upraised and hands as though adjusting a bridal veil upon her head (this one very dim and difficult to follow, and I do not think he worked upon it much); and lastly the sad wreck of what has been called "Grief," named "Vanished Illusions" by the master. Most often one of the two first mentioned would be upon his easel, and never upon my successive visits

did they appear twice the same. They both expressed what he alone could make them do.

Sometimes, as he confessed, he would remain too many days in succession occupied with one work, thus running the inevitable danger of blunting sensibilities through lack of change. And often it was sad to me he could not leave them as they were, complete enough to others' seeming—more perfect and more beautiful than certainly they were when he at last relinquished them. But naturally in this he could be guided by his own feeling only, heeding no protest from without.

He had not been very long installed in his new home before his eyesight troubled him, and in 1909, its defectiveness becoming serious, he visited an oculist, and glasses were afterwards obtained for him. These never seemed quite satisfactory, and soon, alas! effects of his impoverished vision came to be manifest in his work. He never liked to speak of it. And never could I refrain from sad reflections, wondering how much more he might not have achieved of highest beauty if only some such working place as now he possessed too late had fallen to his lot in earlier years.

As to his "Grief"—or, as he called it, "Vanished Illusions"—on this he worked most towards his end, his sight becoming less and less reliable. He left this painting on his easel at the last. Often, as earlier mentioned, he would refer to it with bitterness, as eloquent of the nature of his life, and with its drawing all but lost, its colour dimmed, it sometimes seemed to me the saddest of emblems possible of all the unhappy aspects of his fate.

But is it in reality so? Is there no other point of view? This "Grief," whose image long had haunted him, which to complete was part of his desire, is too much of a wreck to stand within the ranks of his accomplished work. Also, the earlier version of this same conception I have seen lacks the intensely convincing quality of his other work, as though to depict suffering was not really natural to the artist in him. Does it not rather seem as though his art could never brook to have her vision dimmed by aught that he might think or feel, when clouds and storms of bitter feeling swept with oppressing might across his soul —as though in his last work, as in the earlier strong course of his achievement, gladness, not grief, must in the greater measure stand predominant.

IV

RETURNING to London one day in the autumn of 1916, after an absence of some two months or more, and calling at Westbourne Square, I came on Matthew Maris in his work-room, seated on his sofa beneath the window, leaning back and looking pale and tired, and he complained of being very weary. I remember realizing with uneasiness that this was the first time I had found him so; he seemed to be changed, and in his face and in his whole expression was such an air of weariness and of exhaustion that his condition appeared to me a dim and sad foreshadowing of the end. This always marked for me the commencement of his gradual decline, even though on many a succeeding visit I found him stronger, brighter, more his former self again. After this time he seemed to vary more in health than he had previously done. Upon occasions he would be fairly vigorous, his face more full, the old keen fire in his eyes; and then again would come the trying weariness—but on he worked for several months. Minor ailments often troubled him, and he complained but little. Sometimes he suffered much from severe pain in one hip caused by his deformity, and his painting arm would easily grow stiff and tired. Not seldom, when he more readily forgot or lost things, he would, with his former merriment, declare he was afflicted with " rheu-

matics in the intellects," although his faculties were keen, and nature sparkling as ever, and his letters at this time were mostly fraught with laughter. "Did you ever hear," he writes (referring to a lost address), "of rheumatics in the intellect, I must have gotten something of the sort"; and again: ". . . If only my little rest-time will last a bittie. . . . I was so used to be always on my feet . . . so let this [his liking for rest] be a lesson to you all never to grow old."

On the first day when entering Matthew Maris' sitting-room I found him still abed and ailing, I must unwarily have allowed concern to show upon my face, which speedily observing, as quickly did he reprove, laughter being more congenial to him than any hinting of unhappiness. There comes an occasion to my mind when having quietly been ushered in by the "good soul," the day without being dull and gloomy, all was dark within, save for the shaded glimmering of a little lamp set on the round table, which now was covered not merely with letters, papers, and the like, but also, alas! with many sick-room necessaries. All was quite silent, and for some time I sat not stirring, until at last a small voice coming from the bed coverings was heard exclaiming, "Is that you, man?" and then, completely waking, he grew talkative and lively, but he did not rise that day.

On afternoons when he was dressed, together we would sit at the round table with chairs drawn close to one another, and as he, mischievously smiling, said, I must select a high one always, so that he might be able to "look

up to me." And there we would talk, or look at letters or at extracts, or sometimes over books of his own sketches. Once I remember his speaking of a print he had there of his etching of " Religion," sometimes called " The Shepherdess," and saying, *à propos* of it, how necessary it was to get the big lines of a composition right, and also how he had toned this plate with " sulphur-tint." He took much interest still in all his sketches, but especially in a small one he had made of the head of the etched " Sower " —the human side and inner significance of which consummate work, and of its original, always had appealed to him most forcibly.

Matthew Maris had about him numerous reproductions of drawings and paintings of many other artists, and amongst those which I recall our having looked at at this time were those of a fine series of Flaxman's drawings, and of some comic ones by Thackeray.

A little earlier than this, he had for the first time become possessed of a photograph of one of Ivan Mestrovic's powerful works, "Kraljevic Marco" (Marco, the King's son), mounted on his war horse, which keenly called forth his sympathy. Its lack of academic accuracy in anatomy appealed to him, its forceful embodiment of a conception; its savage energy, as of one bent on shattering all obstacles, kindled his enthusiasm, stirring within him as it did some similar desire of annihilating all in life he held to make for tyranny, injustice, or unhappiness.

Here perhaps also, rather than later when considering his views upon the work of other artists, there should be

recorded the regard in which he held the drawings of Töny and of Steinlen. For, though undoubtedly he thought their drawings powerful, in earlier years their ugliness would have repelled him, and the chief source of his interest in them at the time of which I write lay in their subject matter. Their attitude to questions political, social, and industrial, to some extent aroused his sympathy, and sometimes excited what was bitterest in his nature.

But seldom now did Matthew Maris visit his favourite room, and doing so, it was no more for work, but merely to seek for letters, or to arrange his things in order before the end he realized to be not far away. Often he seemed to feel he had not long to live, saying I should call one day soon and find that he was dead. Yet was he so bright and cheerful often, so much his sparkling self, that it was hardly possible to think his death could be so near.

One day, as we sat together in the " salon " employed in some such fashion as I have described, there broke an unwonted sound into our communing—the measured massive tramp of marching men—fresh troops were passing by. He said that some while earlier he had heard them, and that going to the window he there had watched them, such fine young fellows, most likely marching to be killed, and singing all! and " What do you think I did, man?" queried he; and on my enquiring " What?" though knowing well, he said, " I cried."

Once, having framed for him a drawing that he wished to give away, on returning it to him, I set it down upon

the floor against the table, where in the window's light it might be properly seen, and Matthew Maris rose up from his bed and came to look at it. He was not in a happy mood that day, and as he stood there long in contemplation, seeming satisfied, the opening lines of Keats' "Endymion" came into my mind, and I repeated them to him—but "Ah!" exclaimed he bitterly, "you tell that to the world"—and again betook himself to bed.

Matthew Maris had often suffered from disappointment and depression before the final forsaking of his workroom, in part from the sad presence there of uncompleted work which he began to realize he could not ever finish as he would, and many times with unhappiness did he speak of the heart-breaking nature of art work. He did not wish to die, yet never showed the slightest fear of death. If he was troubled by the thought of art work left undone, still more was he concerned in that he felt he had not satisfied his constant craving to help in some measure to create a happier social state. And evermore towards his end he wished he might do aught to bridge that gulf he felt existed between the material and the spiritual worlds in actual life. He had written in a letter of 1909: "I read somewhere—'have not the churches for four hundred years ignored the fact that whereas man does not live by bread alone, yet he requires bread to live. The failure of religion is due to the fact that the churches have separated the material from the spiritual.'" This extract indicates sufficiently the trend of his desire.

It was during his last months perhaps that most fre-

quently he spoke upon matters of religion, and some of those philosophic questions that for ever baffle our powers of solution; and often would he end in wonderings at the ultimate mystery of life. Deep as had been his love and reverence for Nature—so deep that the mere thought of copying in paint fragments of her wondrous handiwork at times had been repugnant to him, and he had often spoken with contempt of "snapshotting" her beauties—yet sometimes he would dwell upon her seeming cruelty and callousness, quoting the lines commencing:

O Nature cold of heart tho' very lavish of thy lovely smile,
As false as fair thou art, winning our love, yet mocking us the while. . . .

And often he would ponder and converse upon the strange conflict between Nature and the soul of man. "Nature never ceases to pursue us," he would quote, "until she has made us sin."

One day as I was leaving him, when he was resting in his bed, I said according to a formula then usual between us, originating in a tale that he had told of student days, "Give me now the hand," extending mine; but a voice came from his pillow that made answer, "Is it a *good* hand, man?" and only on my replying that I hoped it was, his clasp, now feebler, responded to my own.

I have omitted hitherto to mention that during the first years of the Great War through which he lived, although he had no newspaper each day, much of the contents of which would have been but little to his taste,

he was kept more or less *au courant* with the general features of its progress, and would always ask for news.

He had most certainly the strongest love of peace, and the mere contemplation of war with all its horrors filled him with a real distress. Though, through the largeness of his heart, his deep wide sympathies, his knowledge of what formerly had been fine in German literature and art, he was not without sympathy with Germany, in reality he was always hoping for tidings of her defeat, but doubted if ever she would be overthrown. For the spirit of the older Germany, the native land of Goethe and of Schiller—for its patient, sober industry and thoroughness, he ever had respect: but more than once did he repeat the words of Heine to the effect that, when the Germans forsook the Cross they would become Goths, taking to the hammer of Thor and to destruction.

Matthew Maris wished all war could be abolished, but sometimes had doubts if this might ever be, wondering if natural necessity might not prove too strong.

The visits of hostile aircraft over parts of London not far from his peaceful home troubled him not at all upon his own account, and when, during what he would call their grumblings and thunderings, others in the house sought refuge in its basement, never could he be induced to leave his room.

There can exist no doubt whatever that, during the course of his life-time, many had wronged Matthew Maris, taking advantage of his nature and his circumstances, but one day, a few weeks from the end, he said to me that he

was dying bearing no personal ill-will or resentment towards anyone in the world.

Also he said that after all he was glad to have lived, and to have suffered that which in the great sensitiveness and refinement of his nature undoubtedly he had, throughout his life's vicissitudes.

Late on an afternoon of summer, as I stood near by the bed where he was lying, reluctant to leave him, lightly his voice came singing the refrain of Gounod's "Serenade"; and though I little thought that these could be, as in reality they were, the last moments that I ever was to spend with Matthew Maris, after a brief word of leave-taking and a waving of the hand, I passed out sadly at his door.

During the early months of his last year, Matthew Maris had been much wearied by insomnia, and after restless nights he often would remain all through the morning in his four-post bed, not rising till the afternoon. And as time passed, and this trouble increased rather than abated, by slow degrees he came to rise less often from his bed. His food became a source of difficulty, for as he grew gradually weaker he felt dislike for all that formerly he had been wont to eat. No need to dwell upon these last sad details of his life. It is enough to say that through the last days of his decline and final illness, all care was taken of the master, every possible attention was bestowed upon him—all that the skilled trained mind was able to devise, and loving hands could execute, was done to make more gentle the releasing hand of Death. The

cause of his last illness was arterio-sclerosis, which ultimately brought about his end.

On the 18th of August, little more than three days before he passed away, two friends of long standing were present beside his bed—Mrs. van Wisselingh, who through these last and saddest weeks most constantly had brought her ministrations to his bedside, and Mr. H. S. J. Maas, the Consul-General for the Netherlands, who from time to time had rendered many a signal service to the artist. There was a rallying of Matthew Maris' energies: happy and full of wit was he, and sparkling as of old; high burned the flame of his most fascinating personality before, alas! it vanished from our ken.

Three more days he lay not speaking, and on the third, slightly moaning from time to time, he sometimes waved his hands above his head. In the small hours of the fourth day, on August 22nd, 1917, came peacefully his mortal end.

At the summit of the great city wherein were passed so many of his life's last years his body lies, in an old-world part of London that he cared for, where in spring and summer-time the flowers in glad profusion lift their faces to the sky, and Love is not unmindful of the Dead.

PART III

CHAPTERS ON THE CHARACTER, RELIGIOUS VIEWS, LITERARY TASTES, THOUGHTS ON THE WORK OF OTHER ARTISTS, AND THE ART OF MATTHEW MARIS

MATTHEW MARIS

I

THE deep feeling and the great tenderness of conception and of execution that in general are characteristic of the art of Matthew Maris, had their counterparts in the human nature of the man. Wonderful, truly, was his moral unity. He sometimes said that it seemed strange to him a man could in his writing appear one sort of being, and yet could be quite different in his actual life. With him, it was not so. Part of the fineness of his nature lay in that he could not think and feel in one way, and yet live in another. And in his life, as in his work, there was a noble truth, simplicity, and honesty. Ambition in the ordinary sense he knew not.

Ever was he loth to wound the feelings of another, or, in word or action, to do aught to show himself superior to others, or to prove them in the wrong, a reluctance that, for some, appeared at times to approach too near to weakness. At times perhaps he shrank too much from giving a decisive "No." Of one whom, practically open-eyed, he once allowed to take advantage of him, he wrote: "It is not nice to think badly of others, or to be suspicious . . . I could not help it, instinct . . . love your neighbour, even if he be a freen o' yours. I really did feel very sorry for him—you'll say he is a rogue, and so he is."

But though Matthew Maris could not be aggressive,

and disliked either to accuse or seek to punish, he yet possessed that courage that could thrust the money-changers from the Temple, and, as has been already said, he showed no fear of Death.

Just as there triumphed in so much of his art the note of quiet joy, so he within himself was ever prone to gladness; and though he wandered often within sight of the dark ocean of unhappiness, and was profoundly sensitive to the tragic aspect of so much of life, he kept the power of bringing others laughter. Even to within a few months of his end, when he was often weary and in some pain, his letters would be full of merriment, exuberant like waters of a spring fed by far-off summits inexhaustibly.

With what an unsurpassable gentleness he would at times recite passages from his favourite books, and yet, when roused to indignation, be a veritable tempest. He thought that much of usual punishment was ill-advised—that more might almost always be accomplished with refractory natures by kindness than by force. Repugnant, too, to him were all the competitions of education and of life. And in relation to the former he believed that the desire of out-doing others should not be made an incentive to the acquisition of knowledge. Once, on a friend telling him how his son had outstripped another in his class, "Now," said he, "go and tell him to let the other boy beat him."

Saddened he ever was at contemplation of all that long immeasurable tale of man's most infamous cruelty to man and animals. Yet, in his judgements of other's failings,

he would be lenient too, seeking to find excuses for them always—and ever would be severest with himself. Truly it may be said, with him as with Beethoven, that character came before all else—goodness it was alone that in his eyes could confer on any man supremacy above another. For social rank as such, and for wealth as such, he had no respect whatever, but ever was he ready to pay highest tribute to character and to ability, no matter to what class he might belong who was possessed of them. His judgements, too, of men and of affairs were utterly disinterested.

For those who gave what seemed to him an undue weight to intellectual methods and pursuits, failing to recognize their limitations, or seeking therewith to pry into and explain the hidden mysteries of genius, he had little but a mild contempt, and spoke of them in fashion all his own as " wisdomers."

It certainly was part of his ideal for himself to lead a simple and a Spartan life of all possible integrity and purity, and always he held most precious the treasure and the wisdom of the heart. I recall how he would sometimes say, " You must be a Spartan, man!" and again—" You must be human "; his saying also that the greatest treasure that a man could have was a contented heart; and lastly—that the most difficult conquest in all the world to be achieved was that over a man's own self. The following extract is from a letter of his written in 1909: " Weel, all this had a different meaning at the start—' character '—a ton of ermine tails, a hundred

crowns, and trains reaching as high as the clouds, nor a cartload of ribbons, stars and a' that, with all the ornamentation and decoration, doesn't make a king, neither does a wig make justice . . . but the *character* of the human beast underneath."

The goodness of Matthew Maris never took the form of harsh severity, by which trait in others he was apt to be repelled. For him there was always something of this nature about the character of Tolstoy, and upon this account Maris was never strongly drawn towards him, or towards his work. Nor was he an ascetic wishing to set standards too difficult, that most could never hope to follow; nor had he liking for the " unco guid "—" Man," he would often say, " I am no friend to saints." In his unselfishness he was ever loth not only to accept the services of friends, but even of those whose immediate concern it was to minister to his needs; and though he was ever ready to help others, scarce would he admit another's friendship for him to give him any claim upon their service.

With him was no darkening of counsel " by words without knowledge," no wrapping up of seeming knowledge in mere technicalities, no jealous weaving of a barrier of professional mystification to guard from the uninitiate the secrets of his art. Whatever he perceived or felt to be true of art or life, that he expressed in simplest fashion. About him was no distant professional manner or assumption of superiority, but simply honest trueness to himself. And if, as according to the words he loved of Burns, " the

honest man 's the king o' men," in that regard alone he was a king. What a contempt was his for the practical advice proffered to himself and others in his student days —" What does it matter if you sell them turnips for lemons, the money 's the principal!"

It may perhaps by many be imagined not unnaturally because Matthew Maris withdrew himself from the world, living in comparative solitude, that he was out of sympathy with the common joys and sufferings of mankind, and was a misanthrope—no judgement of him could be farther from the truth. Not only was he himself intensely human, but real humanity was one of those qualities which in others most aroused his admiration—and much of his thinking was directed towards the schemes which aimed at lessening human misery. And if the treasures of his nature were hidden from the world, it was in large measure from the paramount necessity of his artistic genius, for he knew instinctively that to produce the work he had to do, he must live for the greater part, and work, in solitude.

He was essentially pure in nature, even a hint of anything obscene being utterly repulsive to him. And human nature was for him, even with all its frailties and errors, and in its humblest types, susceptible of an innate dignity that only mean action could efface.

The attitude of Matthew Maris towards women was one of perfect delicacy and purity, and of romantic chivalry; but he always felt them to be the weaker vessels, and was not in sympathy with certain of their modern ways

and aspirations. One day, with sparkle of merriment in his eyes, he thrust into my hand the following extract:

"According to a Hindoo legend, this is the proper origin of woman. Twashtri, the god Vulcan of Hindu mythology, created the world, but, on his commencing to create woman he discovered that for man he had exhausted all his creative materials, and that not one solid element had been left. This, of course, greatly perplexed Twashtri and caused him to fall into a profound meditation. When he arose from it he proceeded as follows. He took:

The roundness of the moon,
The undulating curve of the serpent,
The graceful twist of the plant,
The light shivering of the grass blade,
The slenderness of the willow,
The velvet of the flowers,
The lightness of the feather,
The gentle gaze of the doe,
The frolicsomeness of the dancing sunbeam,
The tears of the cloud,
The inconstancy of the wind,
The timidity of the hare,
The vanity of the peacock,
The hardness of the diamond,
The cruelty of the tiger,
The chill of the snow,
The cackling of the parrot,
The cooing of the turtle-dove.

All these he mixed together and formed a woman."

With strange sympathy and insight Matthew Maris entered into the world of children, and, as he loved them, and loved them always natural, so they in turn were attracted towards him. How one feels in his "Enfant Couchée" as though one were in very contact with the living dreaming mind of childhood; and with how sweet a glamour of pure romantic joy has he depicted love's first dawning for the young.

He could not, he once said, have married and had children of his own to care for, and at the same time have lived the life he felt was his to live. And it was difficult for him to realize how an artist could be married, and give at the same time wife and art their due. He thought that the finest and best of all that was in an artist must be consecrated to his art alone, and felt that if a man had wife and children, his life must be for them.

Matthew Maris sometimes said he went by contraries, so that if one should ask him to do anything, he well might be inclined to do the very opposite. He had an obstinate tenacity, and as it was wellnigh impossible to move him from his determined course, his time or chosen manner of doing anything, so was it no easy task to prevail upon him with argument, or to make him take a different point of view; and in this he did not easily brook too much opposition. Patient, and possessed of a great fund of inward serenity, he yet was in some fashion irritable, and always had been subject to outbursts of anger which, however, were but of short duration.

If straitened days had taught him to waste nothing,

they had no power to curb his generosity or kindliness. He sometimes worked with others' cast-off brushes, and to the end, when his were worn, cut and turned back their ferrules to use them to the very last.

His work was never done with money-making for its end, but simply because it was inevitable, and by it how little he gained in the material sense! And though he would often say with bitterness he never had been allowed in life to be himself, it is most certain that never did he accomplish anything in the realm of art, in which the aim and method were not all his own. That which he knew not, he discovered for himself, not borrowing from others.

Assuredly did he look forward, and let us hope with a perception as deep and true as that which is manifested in his art, to the advent of a happier social state, wherein what to him were simple right ideals should more prevail, goodwill and brotherhood increase, and where materialism, material selfishness, and tyranny should less obscure the nobler parts of men.

In his large mind Matthew Maris was untrammelled, open, free from the fetters of prejudice, and universal in his attitude: not inquisitive after detailed scientific knowledge, but acquainted with some of the generalizations of modern science—prone himself to generalization in whatever field of intellectual activity his attention might be engaged, as was he also in his art. Holding himself disciple of no particular school, attaching himself never wholly to any one especial creed, he ever sought the

finest essences of all, while he remained a world within himself distinct and individual. At times he would dwell long in wondering contemplation of the miracle of some piece of Nature's handiwork—the eye, for instance, of a common fly, and then upon the instant pass to the contrasting baffling problems of human evil and of misery. Materialism, no matter in what form, was as impossible to him as it was repugnant to his whole being—the universe to him was one vast mystery, insoluble to human intellect. In lieu of vaunted intellectual solutions he had the wisdom of his heart. Out of a dim ideal land, and through the perception of his genius, he drew the interpretations of his artist's soul; out of unsounded depths of reverent great feeling he clothed them with a beauty unsurpassed.

It has been mentioned earlier that Matthew Maris was averse from having aught to do with matters of a business nature. It must not, however, be imagined that he took a narrow view of business in general. He was well conscious of its beneficent side, and had respect for those who could pursue it with honesty, ability, and right aim. He would have welcomed any diminution of what appeared to him the cruel and often insensate competition which he felt must really be as detrimental in business as in other spheres of life; and often was he saddened at consideration of that silent war in so-called times of peace, by which so much of life is characterized. In regard to rebelliousness against the present social state, although he realized with clear vision that freedom as dreamed of by many is a

thing impossible in this life, and from the very nature of things not to be desired, yet would he have had a larger measure of it than certainly obtains at present—the freedom for each man to have a will and personality of his own. In certain moods, and at times, perhaps he might by some have been regarded as revolutionary, but in reality, if so at all, he was far less so than many may imagine, and was too sagacious not to realize that, as he admitted, in practical affairs, moderation is wiser than excess. His sympathies were to the last with those who suffered, and those who were oppressed. In regard to money, for its own sake he desired it not at all, and for himself wished only to possess sufficient to enable him to live under conditions proper to his work, to give him also power of helping others, and if he regretted that in his case there had in general been no nearer approach to what would have been a just remuneration for his work, it was only in so far as this exposed him to the risk of what he felt to be a humiliating dependence upon others.

He never ceased deploring the slow silent banishment of things beautiful from our modern and mechanical world, for he recognized as few do the spiritual value of true beauty in our lives. To the creation of beautiful things his days were consecrated from his youth. His life was no less than one long silent protest of the finest sort, and that with no manner of attitude, profession, or aggressiveness, against all that makes for materialism and material selfishness in modern life—all its undue subservience to machinery; against the prevailing spirit of over-com-

petition and of strife that so darkens all vistas to our sight.

It may not be unfitting, in conclusion, to make mention of three personal wishes expressed by Matthew Maris. One was that no portrait should be painted of him, neither bust, relief, nor mask be made, nor photograph be taken to perpetuate his likeness, and on this he felt most strongly. A second wish was that in any accounts that might be written of his life, there might be woven no fantastic stories round his name, but only the simple truth recorded. And lastly, he once expressed the hope that after his death it might be possible to keep his little home intact with everything as it had been when he was living and at work in it. But it is quite certain that he did not realize how many almost insuperable difficulties would be entailed in the carrying out of such a scheme; and it was found to be impracticable for many reasons needless here to enter into. It is on this account I have described his rooms in so much detail.

II

AT times, and more especially perhaps within the latter months of Matthew Maris' life, his talk would turn to matters of religion. If in the affairs of ordinary life, and in ordinary human relations, he was opposed to anything of the nature of hypocrisy or sham, in all that pertained to religion he was doubly so; bitterly opposed to all forms of persecution in religion's name, to every form of priestcraft, or commingling of religious with politic ends, and to all that to him seemed mystification, and obscuring of plain truths.

Religion for Matthew Maris meant something that must be in real relation with each day's life, and not with that of certain days alone, nor did it for him essentially consist of, or depend upon, ceremonial observances; something that must be in closest touch with that heart's wisdom whose goal is finest guidance of our lives.

According to the Register of the Consistory of the Protestant Church of Antwerp, Matthew Maris was confirmed in 1857, and though at the time I knew him he certainly could not have been considered an orthodox member of any existing Church, for me he was withal by far the truest Christian it has ever been my lot to meet.

Let me not with irreverent step presume to enter far into the secret domain of another soul; into that dim veiled

realm where many a one scarce for himself can give clear definite shape to ultimate ideas of the Divine. And for an artist, who for the most part must work and dwell within a land where power of words is lost or is transcended —for what that is adequately expressible in words can truly form the substance of a work of art—part of his religion must consist of great emotion, solemn ecstasy, that flows to swell the paean of his art, and that in his noblest work finds its expression there.

From his own words it would appear that, for Matthew Maris, Deity was immanent or was manifested rather within the human soul than in some region of the objective universe without—but this must no doubt be taken as permitting only a momentary glimpse and incomplete into a region of his being that, for the rest, must remain unknown. To no existing creed could he give full assent, yet ever was he desirous of selecting that which seemed best from all he knew. And had he ever shaped one for himself in words, it would assuredly have been replete with deep humanity.

He said he wished there might be graven over the portal of each church the words: "Come to me all ye that are in trouble, and I will seek to help you." Most surely there was for him a spiritual world inter-related with this material one, in ways mysterious and inscrutable to our minds—he was a mystic, and one privileged, out of the truth and beauty of his art, to bring to us from the borderland, where with reverent steps he wandered, inspired visions, instinct with a direct spiritual suggestive-

ness, of our world we only know in part. For so-called Spiritualism Matthew Maris had no good word, regarding it but as a thinly-veiled materialism, and to nothing was he more opposed than to this latter, no matter in what guise it might appear.

With regard to virtues, though professing none, how many did he not practise? He seemed to acquire nothing for himself, and was desirous always of helping others.

In spite of his religious and philosophic freedom of belief, it was impossible to know Matthew Maris intimately and not to realize the depth and the sincerity of his religious sentiment. The subject of one of his later canvases and etchings is one of his conceptions of religion. A woman's figure, as of a shepherdess, dimly shrouded, kneels on a darkened earth beneath dark sky—one arm and hand are raised as though in invocation of some more than human aid, while close about her a flock is gathered for protection. Witness, too, the deep religious feeling of the "Christening," centering around maternity—and also that of the moonlit interior of a cathedral. In this connection I recall a reason for the preference he felt for Gothic architecture as compared with Romanesque—it was that for him there was a greater, clearer expression of devotional feeling in the former than in the latter.

And in the deep almost whispering shadows of his trees, his dim leaves against evening skies, surely is there to be found one mode of the divine manifestation, uttering itself through such refined *nuances* of deep feeling as no words can convey.

MATTHEW MARIS

Once I remember when we were speaking of the work of Shelley, whose greatness he remarked upon, at memory of the epithet Atheist applied by some to him, how he was moved to indignation. Let none call Matthew Maris such. Despite his pessimistic moods when all the universe seemed darkened, and quite apart from any words of his, not only his work with its truth, sincerity, and beauty, but all his life of many difficulties, many sufferings of spirit and humiliations, is witness, incontestable if silent, to his deep ideal faith.

III

NO inconsiderable reader was Matthew Maris, and seldom were there lacking a few books from the collection of what he once wrote of as the " debris sliding down on to my beautiful sofa." In literature, as in his own particular realm, his instinct led him to select the finest, but of the scope and nature of his reading I cannot hope to give more here than a brief indication. No doubt he was the better qualified to appreciate fine shades of general style and of expression in works in his own language, or in French or German literature, than in English. Though he was able to follow and appreciate Shakespeare or Burns or Dickens with facility, he would, I think, have failed to extract the kernel out of Meredith, or feel his full significance. Often he would quote from Shakespeare or from Goethe, and deeply felt the greatness of them both; and of French writers he spoke most frequently of Voltaire and Balzac. Of Dickens and Thackeray he was a great admirer, perhaps especially of the former; and into the work of Burns he entered most enthusiastically, and with delight not merely in his subject matter and his feeling, but in his style and language, and not seldom would he intersperse his own talk or writing with fragments from him—as also with expressions of his own concoction in broad Scots. Sometimes with happiest feeling and appro-

priate gesture he would repeat lines from two stanzas of "Fair Jeanie," making a new one of them, as below:

> She 's aye sae neat, sae trim, sae tight,
> She 's aye sae blythe and cheerie,
> She 's aye sae bonnie, blythe and gay,
> O gin I were her dearie!

or would recite part of the "Poem to a Mouse," or of his favourite song, "For a' that an' a' that." The warm heart of Burns appealed to him, and his hard life aroused his sympathy.

As I was unfortunately unacquainted with the Dutch language, we never could speak of the literature of his native land, excepting for brief reference to translations from it.

The generality of poetry certainly did not appeal to Matthew Maris; but I recall his once showing me a short poem, I think in very old Frisian, many words in which were so like English I could understand them without his help, and which for the most part he translated for me, and its sweet pure sentiment and naïve expression pleased him much. Once or twice he spoke a little Flemish to me to give me a notion of its quaint sound and its word terminations. Among the French writers of fiction of whom we talked, he seemed to assign the highest place to Balzac. But one of his favourite books of all was the "Eloge de la Folie" of Erasmus, a little unbound copy of which would usually be lying upon his table, and from this he would often read aloud passage after passage, and not infrequently he quoted from it in his letters.

In the little library within his cabinet, side by side with Goethe's "Reineke Fuchs," and works of Schiller illustrated by Richter, were Grimm's "Fairy Tales" with excellent simple drawings he was fond of, Michel's life of Rembrandt, and many other volumes. A book that had pleased him greatly in past years was Erckmann-Chatrian's "Histoire d'un Conscrit," of which he had the large illustrated volume covered in yellow paper published by Hetzel and Co.

For a very long time at Westbourne Square, Fielding's "The Soul of a People" would lie with the papers upon his sofa; this he much enjoyed, and spoke of frequently; he also read some volumes of Lafcadio Hearn. He was always interested in the life and wisdom of the East, and sayings of Buddha would occasionally find their way into his talk.

For many years Matthew Maris had made it his practice, in his miscellaneous reading, to select passages that specially pleased him, and make written copies of them. Thus he had quite a collection of interesting extracts, and his choice throws light upon his nature.

One work I remember that he especially liked, was the translation into French of an old play, "The Chariot of Terra Cotta," a drama of ancient India, attributed to King Soudraka.

To Tolstoy's writing, though he recognized its power, he was not strongly drawn, nor as has been said, towards the man—and I remember his mentioning with disgust the "Kreutzer Sonata": and with Tolstoy's attitude towards

art, Matthew Maris could never be in sympathy. One of the last books that he read shortly before he was compelled to finally forsake his work-room was Ivan Turgenev's "Lisa," which he thought fine. For Ruskin, with what he called his "wisdom," he had no patience, and could not overlook his attitude and evidence in the Whistler trial, at memory of which he was indignant.

Among modern writers he spoke admiringly of Hardy.

IV

IT frequently happened that on my visits to Matthew Maris, more especially when he was living at Westbourne Square, our thoughts and conversation would naturally turn to the work of other artists from early times up to the present day. I cannot give his actual expressions in such talks, but the substance of what he thought and felt is quite clear within my mind—and perhaps a brief outline of it may not be devoid of interest to some readers. First, however, let me call attention to the catholicity of his taste, as also to the sureness, solidity, and deep perception of his judgement. It is not too much to say that any piece of fine and thorough work in art or craft, even though in aim and method it were poles asunder from his own, would certainly appeal to him.

No object wrought with real taste and, above all, that looked, as he would say, "as though there was some self-respect" in him who made it—such, for example, as the clasp or decoration of a book cover, or a simple ash-bowl—would escape his quick notice and approval.

He much admired the handiwork of the craftsmen of old China and Japan in lacquer, bronze, or ivory, and their wonderful faience; and also their drawings and colour prints, of which he would not seldom speak, and he had unerring judgement in appreciating the large qualities of such *objets d'art*. He was particularly fond among

bronzes of those displaying looseness, freedom, and ease of workmanship, rather than of those which appeared to suggest tightness or constraint in execution.

The worth or inferiority of the decoration of a vase or any similar object would be manifest to him at once, and a small china bowl which he possessed, that used to stand upon the cabinet in his sitting-room, he frequently would take down from its place, passing his finger approvingly over the very simple but beautiful design that ornamented it. In a piece of furniture, such, for example, as the little carved oak stool beneath his table, he would pick out the virtues and the flaws, discerning where the mind or hand of him who made it had fallen short in judgement or in execution, or where the work had probably been completed by another's hand. Gothic furniture appealed most strongly to him, as indeed did so much of the *mobiliers*, the costume, and the building of mediaeval times. In Paris days he had possessed and studied with enjoyment a copy of Viollet-le-Duc's classic work upon the French *mobiliers* of the Middle Ages, which he had lost however long before the time of our first meeting. He often dwelt in conversation on the perfection manifested in so many directions by the art and architecture of the early Middle Ages.

With regard to classic sculpture, although Matthew Maris fully realized its wonderful qualities, I always felt from what he said of it that that sort of definite perfection which was its ideal never aroused the deepest sympathy in his soul.

To the work of Michael Angelo I cannot remember his ever making more than one brief reference: it will be remembered that his " Soldiers surprised whilst bathing " was among the drawings which he copied when a boy. It always seemed to me that the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, more mysterious, tender, and elusive, with nothing in it of the Hebrew sternness of his tremendous contemporary, made a far stronger claim upon Matthew Maris' sympathy than did that of Michael Angelo. Very often he would speak with reverence of the miracles of Leonardo's art, and especially he loved the "Mona Lisa." In his "grand salon " at Westbourne Square there hung over his cabinet an engraving of "La Gioconda" by Calamatta, which Maris, filled with the sense of an infinite tenderness of handling in the original, and out of his own love of the incomparably fine, had found too hard—and he had deftly worked with chalk upon its surface, thus imbuing it with much more of the feeling of the original. Enthusiastic was his approval of Walter Pater's fine appreciation of this masterpiece. For the old legend that while he was engaged in painting it, Leonardo employed minstrels to make Mona Lisa smile, in order that he might copy her expression, he had but ridicule, knowing that such things never can be copied— " it was the smile of Leonardo's mind."

Maris only had disgust for those who saw in this *chef-d'œuvre* simply a piece of subtle painting—and laughter for one he knew who, having as he said found out Leonardo's palette, asserted he would now be able to paint in the manner of the great Florentine. But this admiration for

Da Vinci by no means precluded criticism of his work, and I remember that once on showing Matthew Maris a reproduction of the " La Monaca " in the Pitti Palace, he pronounced it to be very ugly.

I cannot recall Matthew Maris speaking more than a very little of the work of Raphael, but near to the old carved bedstead in his salon there hung a photograph of Raphael's composition of " The Plague," which I know he admired greatly—and he also once or twice referred to the Ansidei Madonna which he did not care for much, feeling it crude and immature compared with other of Raphael's work. For the Holy Family of Andrea del Sarto in the National Gallery he had an unbounded admiration, not only for its beautiful low-toned colour, the tenderness of its execution, and the quality of its painting—but especially for its naturalness and for its unaffected humanity.

Another of his favourite works in the same gallery was the " Vision of St. Helena " of Paolo Veronese, which he loved for its great composition and nobility of conception and execution.

For Rembrandt's great genius he had profound respect, but he did not very often make reference to his work; I think those works of the master whose subjects were religious least appealed to him. He had one small reproduction of a landscape sketch of Rembrandt's, very simple and complete, which he said must have been drawn as easily as another man might have scribbled off a letter. He also had some reproductions of the drawings of Rembrandt's

friend, Hercules Seghers, which he liked considerably, and it was his belief that Seghers painted the celebrated picture of "The Mill" attributed to Rembrandt.

Of Velasquez he sometimes spoke with very great enthusiasm, but never would believe that the Rokeby Venus was all, if at all, his handiwork; and could not think Velasquez would have completed anything so trivial in conception, no matter how finely the figure might be painted. In the work of Rubens must have been much not congenial to the spirit of Matthew Maris, but he remarked on the artist's wonderful power and facility.

He felt the greatness of Van Dyck, and dwelt enthusiastically upon the expression of nobility pervading all his work.

Jacques Callot's etching was interesting to Matthew Maris, but he thought his technique not calling for any notice.

For Claude le Lorrain and his large poetry he had great admiration, and would say such works as his could never be transcribed from Nature, but must be compositions from the artist's inner being.

The painters of the school of Barbizon made strong appeal to him, but of these it was of Corot that he oftenest talked, and his work I think it was he most admired. One day when we were speaking of him, Matthew Maris made reference to the stiffness and tightness of his early work, remarking, in regard to it, that as a rule an artist could hardly hope to do his finest work before the age of forty—not merely from the difficulties to be overcome

in mastering his art, but from the embarrassments that so often would impede him in his earlier life. He also called my attention to the extraordinary extent to which Corot's work had been counterfeited. He loved the poetry, the looseness, and the tender quality of his maturer painting, and possessed a print of his "Souvenir d'Italie" which, in the extreme careless ease of its execution, greatly pleased him; he said, however, he would have liked it more had its hard lines been softened by *retroussage*. He dwelt with warmest appreciation on the generous kindly nature of the man, which much attracted him, recounting many an instance of his humanity.

Of the works of Jean François Millet in general he talked but little, though his feeling for the "Sower" was very deep and lasting, and to the end his interest in his own re-interpretation of it remained quite fresh. There is no doubt that the spirit of this work profoundly stirred his sympathies, for therein was expressed, and how deeply in his etching, all the pathos and the dignity of labour; and in the execution of this etching he was moved to the very springs of his most human feeling.

Perhaps, in conclusion, it may not be undesirable to add a few brief notes on his opinions with reference to the work of certain modern artists. Matthew Maris sometimes expressed the view that some of the best of present-day art was to be found in book illustrations, rather than in pictures. He would say, too, in how many cases the monochrome reproductions of pictures were more satisfactory than the originals, for one lost the triviality of colouring

which so frequently detracted from the effect of fine drawing and of composition. Also that often, on seeing a reproduction, he imagined it in colour, and then it was sometimes a shock to see the actual picture: for anything approaching to levity, thinness, triviality, or inappropriateness of colouring was distasteful to him, and he preferred solemnity of tone, such as obtains in Andrea del Sarto's " Holy Family."

Whistler's work attracted him, and he spoke of the simplicity and dignity of certain of his portraits, and felt the large and simple qualities that lay beneath the mask he wore before the world. For Gilbert's work he had deep admiration, and held him the great craftsman of modern times. Once Degas' name was mentioned, but he made me feel by his look and gesture of impatience, though saying nothing, that perhaps he never could be reconciled to the use to which this wonderful painter had devoted part of his so brilliant power. For the vagaries of much of modern art he had no word. Cubism, or something very like it, he said, had been rife even in his day in Paris, but such influences never had been capable of luring him a hair's breadth from his course, and he regarded them either with a mild amusement, or as not entering within that pale where serious criticism becomes possible.

V

IN connection with the work of Matthew Maris, I feel that anything approaching to a complete and comprehensive survey of it would lie beyond the scope and purpose of this small volume, and therefore propose in that which follows to do little more than briefly touch upon the large subject of his art, limiting myself in the main, though not exclusively, to general considerations, rather than entering upon detailed exposition in regard to individual examples. And as anything of the nature of analysis and so-called criticism was repugnant to Matthew Maris, I shall seek to do little more here than record an appreciation all too inadequate of his great achievement; to describe his chief aims and methods, and to arrive at expressing a perception of certain of those qualities peculiar to his genius alone. I have been guided in essence by his own statements in reference to his work, and by the intimate sympathy with it he knew me to possess.

In his art there can be no doubt that Matthew Maris was precocious as a boy, and the small water-colour drawing of his master's daughter executed by him when he was but thirteen years of age shows him already capable of expressing refined feeling, possessed of the germs of his sensibility to subdued fine colour—exhibiting, besides, decided technical quality, and no little power of draughtsmanship. Also the many copies that he made

at his own pleasure, while yet a boy, from the drawings of various artists are noteworthy, not only as indicative of qualities he then admired, but as showing his remarkable facility, for they were made direct into his album with pen and ink, without the intervention of any pencil work, and without corrections, and they possess complete fidelity to the originals. Amongst them were many from Richter's illustrations of works of Goethe and of Schiller, instinct with charming grace, tenderness, and humour. Illustrations of old fairy stories are among them too, and show his interest to have lain with things imaginative and human in their bearing. There was in addition an early drawing made in his album, from Nature, of part of the old port of Antwerp—the cathedral in the distance, with ships against a jetty, and men busy loading up a barge with sand; and the action of the numerous small figures it contains is remarkable. It bears the stamp of easy rapid execution, and is in pen and ink upon a certain amount of nebulous background of grey chalk tone, and in it there always seemed to me to be foreshadowed his future distaste for definite hard boundaries. It is also not atmospheric only, but has about it a slight feeling of the qualities of dream and mystery so marked in much of his later work. His first small pencil drawing, for a magazine, of a kneeling girl enfolding a baby in one arm while with the other she reaches to pluck leafage for a favourite goat, is full of an artless simplicity and naturalness, and is very simple and direct in execution, and harmoniously poetic in its composition.

MATTHEW MARIS

Matthew Maris once showed to me two excellent reproductions of examples of his early work in oil painting of a period when, with a very broad, simple, solid, and direct technique, not very different from that of his brother James at one time, he seemed as it were to be laying the foundations of the technical breadth and solidity of his later work. The earliest oil paintings of his that I have seen were of a fine handling and finish, " smaller " technically than his later work, and it would seem as though from this beginning, about and after his Antwerp time, he passed to a more direct, broad, solid technique, and from this again, as gradually his power in all its fullness was unfolded, to one that though it bore resemblances to his natural earliest method, had acquired much more solidity and breadth, and in addition, those especial qualities which make it quite unique. One of the reproductions above referred to was of a landscape wherein a quiet stream winds gleaming through a level meadow walled off from the world by trees—just such a rural spot as, in his later life, he said he would have loved to live and wander in. A thick and shadowed willow stem curves from one bank over the stream, and at its base, all unobtrusive in the shade, and seated painting in an anchored boat, there sits the artist himself hid away in the solitude of his choice; and one cannot escape the feeling that here, as in the very much later " Souvenir of Amsterdam," he is depicting his own mind state. There is something massive, almost solemn, in this presentation of his pastoral retreat, and not only does it give the impression of an almost palpable

repose, but of the sympathetic quietude of the painter's soul harmoniously merged in that of Nature.

It was the opinion of Matthew Maris, expressed in later life, that all art should be the true, unaffected and spontaneous outcome of the artist's being—like, as he used to say, "the song that sang itself all the livelong day" unforced, and coming also in its own time and manner. "How can you know beforehand," he once said, "what you want to do?"—implying thereby that all unsolicited, and without previous intimation, the conception of a work to be executed appears (one knows not how) visualized in the consciousness of the artist. For Matthew Maris held that the conception must come first, no work of art in his view consisting of a simple transcript of anything outside oneself in Nature or in life. Then, before putting a stroke upon canvas, copperplate, or paper, its image must be visualized —one must see it all complete in the mind's eye, and hold it in one's mind all through one's work, and know exactly what one is aiming at. And for him, imagination in the artist consisted in the power of visualizing such a conception so clearly and plainly as to enable him to draw or paint from the image in his mind, perhaps with the intervention of a simple sketch, as though he were working from something material outside himself. So was it that Blake achieved his work. But to Matthew Maris, Nature and the natural were in certain senses paramount, although with his imagination he dominated them.

Someone once said of Clark-Maxwell, the physicist, that his mind was so in unison with Nature that, when

he thought, he could hardly do so out of harmony with her laws. Thus, somewhat similarly, might it be said of Matthew Maris, that so deep was his love of Nature's aspects and reverence for her mysteries, so was his large unconscious memory stored with images of them, and so much was his feeling in harmony with her, that he must visualize his conceptions with natural truth. And thus, in the seclusion of his own room, he could bring forth from out of himself work more true to Nature than that accomplished by many another artist when face to face with her.

Indeed, actual contact with Nature at the time when one is working is, for one who is possessed of imagination, as Blake found, very often a distraction, and an impediment to the free exercise of the faculty. Matthew Maris seemed at times to be so absolutely one with Nature's inner spirit, that when he worked out of his soul and mind, it was, save for the impressed unity and harmony, and for the distinctive creative qualities of his imaginative genius, as though Nature had done the work herself.

Also, for him there were no accidental effects in art. He must find out in each case the particular expression of a hidden law relating form to feeling. Thus, as he said, in the composition of the " Sower " of J. F. Millet as he etched it there was, given all the rest, only one possible form and position for the line of the distant horizon of the land against the sky that would give most perfectly the sought-for harmony and the required effect with most adequate expression—and if that line were altered all

would be destroyed. It may seem paradoxical but it is true, that the very " indefiniteness " of his work was also definite, to wit, in texture, quality, and distribution; it was not a mere vague softening of hard forms, but one which contributed in definite manner to an effect in the artistic presentation of mysticism in feeling or conception, although the ultimate mysticism it is the means of expressing is indefinable with exactitude and unbounded. Matthew Maris felt also that the means of expression—medium and technique—should vary somewhat with the subject, and be as far as possible in harmony with the spirit of that which one desired to convey.

What, then, were the general characteristics of art work that he deemed most desirable, and what those which were peculiar to his own?

First perhaps he loved it to be living, in no sense dead either in effect or in execution; also that in technique it should have looseness, freedom, breadth. He more than once recalled the old comparison of the paintings of Ingres and Delacroix. " You go to the Zoological Gardens and see there the animals alive—then to the Museum, where you find the same creatures stuffed." The vigorous living quality of Delacroix was more to his liking than what was for him the stiffness, constraint, and comparative lifelessness of Ingres. He used to possess a few pages designed for children, from an old German paper, and on one of these sheets was a woodcut of the triumphal coronation progress of an Emperor. This, by an artist whose name is lost, was splendidly drawn, and filled with an abounding

vitality, and of this drawing Matthew Maris was very fond—he would move his arms as though beating the drums himself, and say you could almost hear them. In his own "Enfant Couchée" the near approach to the feeling of life manifested in it, though in so different a fashion, seems to me always extraordinary. He also preferred work that in general was warm rather than cold in its effect.

Let us now consider some of the qualities of his technique.

From the simple, direct, strong painting above referred to, not very different from that of his brother James at one period, his genius led him when still young to those technical methods generally prevailing in what is usually regarded as his maturest work—to those which were of all possible the best fitted for the purpose of expressing that which in especial he had within him to express.

And that which appears to me one of the most remarkable characteristics of his technique is that in itself it is so very largely a means of everywhere, throughout each work, manifesting his deep sensibility—and this to such an extent that scarcely does it seem so much a definitely acquired set method of putting on paint or, in the case of his etchings, of arranging lines, as a spontaneous embodiment of feeling, in every touch of brush or needle. It was on necessity for depth and truth of feeling, rather than mere intellect in art work, that he always laid most stress, and this that he held to be of highest value; and this sensibility is apparent through all the magic workings

of his tool, to an extent, it seems to me, far greater in his case than in that of any other artist. This is to me one of the unique qualities of his technique.

And secondly, his technical method is the means wherewith in especial he conveys to us that quality of mystery that is so dominant a characteristic of his mature art; a quality which is never so much manifest in subject or in composition, as in the nature and the extent of the indefinite suggestive texture of his works. In this again he is unique.

Lastly, let us glance at the quality of immateriality in his art, which finds its expression also in large measure through the method of his work.

It is a significant fact that Matthew Maris altogether disliked mezzotint, by reason of his finding its texture too impenetrable. For it presents inevitably, even in most delicate passages, the sense of a wall or curtain through which one cannot pass. And in virtue of this quality, for Matthew Maris, it too completely suggested the material attributes of outward things. He preferred, and discovered, especially in his etching, but also in works in other media, a texture more penetrable, one that as it were one could feel through, and that suggested no material barrier; one that was adapted, therefore, for embodying and for conveying a sense of immaterial qualities in his representations of the outer world. Matthew Maris in his work, as in his life, strove ever to escape from the material. This mystery and immateriality of suggestion are most clearly manifest in his small etching of the "Bride," and in

that of the "Enchanted City," and in many other examples of his work.

And is it not largely through these qualities he leads us to that dim borderland where natural and spiritual meet —that he suggests that realm of which Francis Thompson wrote:

> O world invisible we view thee!
> Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does not his method, with its lacking of hard lines and boundaries, its open penetrable texture, suggesting dreams, make one feel one can pass out beyond the limitations of sense and matter, and of knowledge, into an infinite realm that Blake sought in imagination, and of which the material world, as we usually think of and perceive it, is but the outward manifestation, symbol, or expression? The dream texture is very marked in some of his later drawings, and in his latest painting he was striving for it still, by use of thick dry paint left on the rough projections of the surface of his canvas, and of the underlying work. This direct immateriality of suggestion in so much of his work seems to me individual to Matthew Maris. Without pursuing these comparisons into details it seems to me that in general his landscapes are instinct with painter's poetry of that large order that is found *par excellence* in works of Nicholas Poussin, of Claude, and of Corot—yet in his lesser range how much more deeply has he not gone in spiritual suggestion—to poetry of composition and of colour has he not added and made manifest to our percep-

tion, even in representations of the simplest things, a mystic's sense of an underlying and profound significance of things beneath their outward seeming, and of that eternal and inscrutable mystery that for him enshrouds the universe and life.

And it is not in his landscapes only that Matthew Maris' poetry appears, but its peculiar and indefinable charm is manifest in every manifestation of Nature or of life that he presents to us. Were it in a measure possible to express in words the subtle speech of colour, in so far painting would become unnecessary, but words can only hint those qualities of it whose essence must be felt.

How great the choiceness of Matthew Maris' colour, how exquisitely refined, subdued, and mellow, yet often joyous; ever in harmony with the spirit of that which he wished in each work to convey; its range, too, great as its fine quality is rare. Compare the quiet joyousness of that of the reclining "Girl and Butterflies" with the sombre yet warm greys of the "Outskirts of a Town." Nor must we forget the unity and often the gravity of his tone.

In some of his paintings he obtains much preciousness of surface. In many ways it would seem that he approved the ancient dictum that the height of art is in concealing art, and he appeared to feel that in it the indications of the tool employed should not obtrude themselves upon the beholder's notice—the conventional as far as possible be banished, thus securing the fullest obtainable approach to naturalness; so that the work might as it were appear

a spontaneous flower of super-nature, into whose very substance had been woven the artist's soul—and into whose spirit he who contemplated should pass at once, unconscious alike of medium and of technique. So that, in looking at his pictures, etchings, and drawings, one loses in varying degree the sense that they were made with paint and brushes, with needle and acid, or with chalk; and, passing as it were direct into a fragment of life or nature endowed with harmony and unity, which is also part of that new and often enchanted world discovered for us by his poetic imagination, one is brought into intimate contact not so much with its substance as with its spirit.

Another quality of indefinable charm pervades much of his work—that of faïery or enchantment. It would seem, perhaps, not quite felicitous to speak of this as magic, except in so far as all true work of genius is magic, for does not the word imply most usually something, if but a trace, of qualities old, dark, and occult, something suggestive of the alchemist or wizard? Is it not one which characterizes more aptly the work of Leonardo and his spirit, than that of Matthew Maris? Is not in Matthew Maris' case, faïery or enchantment implying a something lighter, that never approaches even near the sinister, more truly descriptive of this aspect of his art? His vision seems at times to be almost the glorified and intensified vision of a child, while that of Leonardo is rather the imaginative perception of a complex nature, suggestive of vast age, and great experience of human mind and spirit.

MATTHEW MARIS

The culture of Matthew Maris—if indeed one may employ at all in connection with his simple nature a word that would have been so utterly distasteful to him—was of an order widely different from that of Leonardo; neither did he possess the latter's restless scientific curiosity; nor are there any traces in his work of that sinister suggestion so often found in Leonardo's art.

It seems to me not uninstructive to dwell for a moment upon the comparison and contrast which to many may seem strange, of the " Mona Lisa " of Da Vinci with Matthew Maris' painting of the " Enfant Couchée "; for from the consideration of these so different works an interesting and characteristic difference between the natures of the two men of genius may be discerned. Problems relating to the mature and complex human soul did not engage Matthew Maris in his art—although his interest in " La Gioconda " was deep, his appreciation of it most profound. Now in the " Mona Lisa " there is no more deep insight into a highly complex and subtle nature, than in the " Enfant Couchée " there is wonderfully deep insight into the dreaming and simpler mind and soul of childhood. But it is a strongly marked characteristic of Matthew Maris that his insight led him for the greater part into the soul of the young and comparatively simple, while Leonardo was for ever probing into the complex depths of beings more mature.

Occasionally in Matthew Maris' work one becomes aware of a subtle sense of motion, sometimes of unquiet, even where at first there seems to be tranquillity; the former

bringing to us a suggestion of that ceaseless unrest of the stream of life and mind, and of all the universe as it flows for ever onward through the land of the unknown; and the latter, as in the "Outskirts of a Town," a vague though haunting sense of tragic possibility. In the "Enfant Couchée" also one distinctly feels the unrest of the living actively brooding spirit of the child.

I have referred to his depicting himself and his mind state in an early landscape, and this would seem markedly the case in his solemn "Souvenir of Amsterdam," in which one directly passes not only into the crowded life-spirit of the town, but at the same time into the dominating reverie of the painter's mind as he presents this double content of his work—for he it is who, leaning at the rail in the foreground of the picture, lost in contemplation, is merged with the spirit of his surroundings.

In connection with the etchings of Matthew Maris, it may be well to recall how the compelling power of a work of genius will force us to abandon slavery to a conception that is no longer adequate. Of this nature would seem to be that of "economy of line" applied beyond its proper limitations. Matthew Maris in his etching was entirely self taught, save for what information as to materials, processes, and manipulations he gathered from reading—I think it was "Lalanne." All of his plates, excepting the large one of the "Sower," he happily was able to print himself, and thus to imbue them with just those qualities of feeling that no hand but the artist's own can ever give. As is perhaps now generally known, he

regarded his series of small etchings as but so many experiments by which he might arrive at technique and command that should enable him to execute the great work of the " Sower." But how unique and wonderful in themselves is this little series of gems, apart from the achievement that consummated them. It is characteristic of the artist that he once made mild complaint against the whole business of etching on the ground that, as he said, one " had to think it out," so great was his love for spontaneity.

One of the earliest of his experiments is the etching of a simple stream that, bordered by a dark shaded bank and overhung with many a shadowed stem, winds its way gleaming into a dim mysterious distance; while on its surface a boat with a solitary occupant drifts dreamily. When looked at closely this seems literally to be but a mere tangled open network of strong spontaneously scribbled lines and almost unrelated touches part obscured by *retroussage*, and only in a most general sense can it be said that some method or system has guided the hand that made them. Here, perhaps, more clearly than in the later ones of the series, generally known, is visible how that hand flew hither and thither simply in direct response to the varying impulses of feeling from moment to moment of the work, rather than obeyed in detail any thought-out method. Seen from the proper distance all is poetry and mystery.

Work of this character, but wonderfully refined upon as his mastery increased, is seen to some extent in all his

small etchings, as from this most spontaneous beginning he passed to his final technical methods in ways that have no doubt been followed by students of his etchings, the dry-point being not infrequently made use of, and more of thought-out method being of necessity gradually introduced. In all of them, the complete originality of their technique, whence comes their wonderful texture, and through which so largely is expressed their quality of mystery, makes them unique apart from their indescribable poetry and their romantic beauty. Needless to seek in them resemblances to work of other hands—they are akin unto themselves alone. All of them seem to me as though out of the depths of the mysterious darkness that enfolds them they voiced some beauteous refrain.

One, though tremulous with life, is yet instinct with an indwelling tranquillity. Its water, though shimmering, is full of rest—the spirit of the falling night breathes through its trees. Serenely, far away, ethereal and dominating there rises triumphant the enchanted city of the poet's dreams; while all about it wells the lingering effulgence of a vanished day. Nor is it evening light alone, for with it mingled is the irradiance of the artist's soul. So also the night that one feels hovering, not far, is one which in the deep recesses of the master's being is eloquent of the endless mystery of creation. Fashioned is this city of a multitude of quivering and sensitive touches, answering to the ebb and flow of his deep feeling; touches that sometimes almost seem to leap like restless aspirations at a song, the while they mingle its dream fabric with

the fairyland of sky. Below is no dead opacity—but darkness penetrable, that of the night of many voices whose high solemnity is whispered by the tall dark trees, and felt again in the impassioned melody of dark massed leaves against its sky.

The bride, too, with parted lips, almost sings out of her darkness—and the lady beneath the tree, or as he sometimes named her, the Lady of Shalott, chants from her wonderland low melody with pure ecstasy of joy, her hands about to move as if in time with music almost tangible.

Let us not leave his etchings without once more glancing at the "Sower," which, as has before been mentioned, retained its deep interest for Matthew Maris to the last. It has been suggested that, in this etching, there is a loss of the dynamic quality of the original, but surely this is but veiled, rendered less evident to a too cursory regard, and made subservient to the spiritual intention of the reinterpretation. Also, it is but one element, and that a mechanical physical one, of the original work, contributing its part towards the general meaning and expression of the whole. But the aim of Matthew Maris was to call attention also to the possible and deeper interpretation of its spirit, to make it more general and symbolic, and to this end, the prominence of the dynamic quality would not have assisted. How deep a sense has he not here expressed of all the pathos and the dignity of human labour, and of the insoluble enigma that enshrouds the life and work of man.

Matthew Maris was not satisfied with the printing of

this plate, as was almost inevitable, seeing that, owing to the difficulties arising from its size, he was not able to accomplish it himself. The distribution of the lighting on the figure, and over the land, was never quite what he wished they should be, nor the quality of the *retroussage*, and so upon some of the proofs he afterwards worked, rendering their line-work still less visible.

An exquisite daintiness and refined romantic feeling are manifest in many of the drawings and water-colours of the master. In some of the sketches that he made of children one sees the extreme delicacy of his feeling, the complete ease and looseness of his often rapid execution, and also an intensely living quality. One such I remember in the Memorial Exhibition of his work held at the French Gallery in the winter of 1917-18, that was curiously different from the rest, recalling in a strange and unmistakeable manner the translucence and serenity of some fine marble mask.

Some of his sketches almost appear as though they had been woven by a magic shuttle, darting hither and thither lightly and tentatively under the impulse of an enchanter's hand. The direct seeking after immateriality of texture seems most evident in his latest painting, though definite bounding lines and edges in general he always had avoided in the most characteristic of his work, including his etchings, in which he for the greater part attained to an indefinite texture, quite indescribable in words, which most nearly expressed his own interpretation of the spirit of outward things.

MATTHEW MARIS

The art of Matthew Maris in its vision, its mode of regarding nature, is perhaps the least material of any, ever seeking as it does suggestion of the inapprehensible world of mind and spirit.

His life work seems, as he desired it should be, the embodiment of one great song, that, often instinct with solemnity, if sometimes sad and questioning, yet is for the greater part a song of tempered joy, and one which ever rises clear above the voice of his own personal pain. This last has ceased; the first lives on, among the priceless treasures of humanity.

The gelatine transfer sheet used by Matthew Maris in etching the *Sower* of J. F. Millet. The marginal line indicates the extent of the etched surface on the copper plate.

Pencil drawing of a Dead Baby

By kind permission of H. S. J. Maas, Esq.

A Child's Funeral in Paris about 1870; pen-and-ink drawing

Drawing of a deserted *tonnelle* in chalk, pencil, and ink; from one of the Paris sketch-books of Matthew Maris

Riverside drawing in water-colour and chalk, made near Paris; from one of the Paris sketch-books of Matthew Maris

Drawings of a Child in Italian chalk; from one of the Paris sketch-books of Matthew Maris

The Dancing Boy: sketch in Italian chalk for an oil-painting

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